IN COUNTRY

Screenplay by

Frank Pierson

Adapted from the book by

Bobbie Ann Mason

RICHARD ROTH
PRODUCTIONS

SECOND DRAFT
May 26, 1987

RECEIVED
MAY 28 1987
STORY LIBRARY

FADE IN:

CLOSE: A NICE COUNTRY FACE

A Methodist Preacher in his fifties; well fed, bifocals to help with his occasional glance at his notes, is delivering a commencement address to high school seniors. He is not a fool.

SPEAKER
America was God's light on this earth, America was the world's good Samaritan. But along the way we lost our strength, and our world is fallen. We forgot our place in God's plan for America. Now it is up to you, the youth of America, as you come to take your place beside us in society, to take up this great task, and rebuild our nation, in the image of God, to rebuild His armies of the righteous to make us strong and proud again, not afraid to work and sacrifice... etc.,etc.

CAMERA has found the audience. Western Kentucky people, some unmistakably country folk, with the cool look, the distant gaze from blue eyes, the high cheekbones and raw look of people wed to their land, contrasting to the townspeople, sleek and contemporary.

WE SEE the faces of the graduates: they aren't listening -- they're waiting for the sound of the voice to stop, so their lives can begin.

SAM(ANTHA) HUGHES is looking around to see if LONNIE MALONE, her seventeen year-old steady is watching. Lonnie is five eleven, muscular, good looking. Lonnie looks at her from a distance; she dead-pan blows a gum-bubble to make him laugh. He doesn't: with superhuman control he stares blank faced back at her. Sam bursts into silent paroxysms of laughter that feed on the near hysterical tension of the moment.

She looks away, meets the eyes of DAWN GOODWIN. Dawn is staring into space. Just under her hair you can see she has on a Walkman; she's listening to music to calm her soul.

DURING THIS WE HAVE LOST THE SOUND OF THE PREACHER; MUSIC HAS INSINUATED ITSELF, AND PLAYS OVER THESE IMAGES OF IMPATIENT YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES, AND THE PREACHER, HIS MOUTH MOVING SILENTLY, HIS FACE FULL OF EARNEST ENDEAVOR AND SENTIMENTAL SERIOUSNESS, LIKE REAGAN.

THE SONG IS STEVIE WONDER'S "YESTERYEAR"

What happened to
The world we knew?
I had a dream,
So did you...
Life was warm, love was true.
Now, now it seems
Those yesterdreams
Were just a cruel and foolish game we had to play.
Yesteryear, yesteryou, yesterday.
When I recall what we had
I feel lost, I feel sad
(etc.)

ON THE PREACHER

As he folds his notes and sticks them in an inside pocket, we can lip read...

PREACHER
...to make America strong.

He stops...

ON THE GRADUATES

They fling their mortar boards in the air...CAMERA PANS UP WITH THE HATS THAT FILL THE SKY -- LIKE BIRDS...

SUPERIMPOSE MAIN TITLE

The sky full of hats, <u>becomes</u> a skyfull of white birds, mysterious white birds, egrets, thousands of them...

EMMETT SMITH

He still sits, while the graduation crowds swirl about him in the excitement. He has a distant gaze: <u>he</u> sees those birds.

He is about 35, a Viet Nam veteran, with a slightly spaced movement about him, as though everything happened a split second later for him than for everyone around him. He has an angry rash on the side of his face. He is Sam's uncle.

IRENE, Sam's mother, early thirties, trim, good looking, carrying a tiny baby (HEATHER), is crying and smiling; next to her is LARRY, her husband, older, a big soft man. On Emmett's other side are **MAMAW** and **GRAMPAW HUGHES**, Sam's Grandparents on her father's side, and her father's sister **DONNA**, carrying a babe in arms. Grampaw is tall, moves with the stiffness of a long life of hard physical work; eyes of blue glass, a far away look, a wry understated humor; Mamaw is huge, moves with glacial slowness and a sailor's gait from carrying her weight. She wears a fine stiff shiny dress, with a great round sun hat. She is crying too.

THEY ALL RISE

as the hats go in the air, except Emmett who dreams on, where he sits.

SAM COMES FLYING out of the maelstrom of kids and parents to Irene...

DURING THIS EVERYONE IS MOVING TOGETHER, A RIVER OF PEOPLE, ALL TALKING AND GREETING EACH OTHER, WEAVING IN AND OUT, DIALOGUES OVERLAPPING...THE CAMERA IS LIKE A MOVING EAVES-DROPPER IN THE CROWD... ONE LONG MOVING SHOT:

SAM
Mamma, wasn't it wonderful? Aren't you proud of me?

IRENE
Larry, honey, hold Heather for a sec.

LARRY
(aiming camera)
Hold on hon, just let me get this one of the new woman! Cheese!

SAM
(cheerfully)
Oh, for God's sake, cheese!

He snaps the shot, takes the baby...

IRENE
(hugs Sam)
You looked cute as a bug up there.

MAMAW
Sam, I wisht your father could of been here to see you.

Sam turns to Mamaw; a sudden shift of mood crosses her excitement...

MOVING SHOT FAVORING SAM AND MAMAW

SAM
I think he was, Mamaw. I felt it. I could feel his eyes on me.

The kids are sweeping past this group, like a flock of skimming birds... one of them, Lonnie, stops and puts his arm over Sam's shoulders, familiarly...ad libs greetings, using "sir" and "ma'am."

THE CAMERA NOW MOVES TO FAVOR LONNIE, IRENE, SAM

IRENE
Congratulations, Lonnie, are you going to Murray in the fall?

LONNIE
No, Ma'am, my brother's the college boy in the family. I'm just glad to be done high school.

LARRY MOVES INTO THE SHOT, OBSCURING LONNIE

LARRY
Sam, when are you coming up to Lexington?

Sam answers Irene, without looking at Larry.

SAM
I told you I didn't want to go to U.K. All I need is a car and I can commute to Murray.

This is old stuff to Lonnie: he LEANS INTO SHOT

LONNIE
(to Sam)
Everybody's meetin after, at the Lake.

SAM
You'll have to come pick me up...

Lonnie ad libs goodbyes...

MOVING CAMERA HAS BROUGHT THEM PAST EMMETT...

Emmett is still dreaming. they make little effort to hide the fact they're talking about him. He looks a little stoned. Sam is growing irritated...

FAVORING IRENE AND SAM

IRENE
I don't like to see you stuck down here with Emmett, Sam, doing everything he does.

SAM
What makes you think I do?

IRENE
I just do. How is he?

SAM
He's got these headaches, and the rashes.

IRENE
You're taking too much on yourself, Sam. I wish you'd come live with me.

SAM
I can't just pick up and walk away.

The subtext is "like you did. You always run away." Sam glances significantly at Larry, who has moved into SHOT carrying the baby...

IRENE
I put up with Emmett for thirteen years, and I think I deserve a little happiness now, so don't talk to me in that tone, Sam. Good grief.
(delighted, as the baby bicycles)
Well, who pulled your string?!
(takes baby from Larry)
Show your toofie, Heather.

SAM
Isn't she too young to have teeth?

IRENE
She's precocious.

SAM
Does she bite your nipple?

IRENE
No, she's careful.

SAM
I've heard of babies born with teeth. And tails too. One in a hundred thousand babies is born with a tail. Does that baby have a tail?

IRENE
Honestly, Sam! We don't have to decide anything now, but you're graduated, you have to make decisions.

CAMERA HAS BROUGHT US BACK TO Mamaw who has been talking to an acquaintance... she sees Lonnie a little distance away...

MAMAW
Is that the boy that won the Libertyville game with all them jump shots?

SAM
That's Lonnie Malone.

GRAMPAW
Sam, you ought to come out and see us more, we'll feed you, you need a little fattenin up.

MAMAW
I'll cook a country ham and some damson pie, and we won't let Emmett have any.

Dawn emerges from the streaming crowd...

DAWN
Hi, everybody. Sam, we're all going to the Lake?

CAMERA GIVES US A TWOSHOT: SAM AND IRENE

Irene takes pity: she sees Sam just wants to get on to the celebration.

IRENE
Go on, honey.
(as they hug)
I just want you to be happy.

They both begin to weep.

MAMAW
Now you're gettin me to bawlin again.

Sam breaks away and starts to join the crowd...

CARRYING CAMERA TO GRAMPAW

GRAMPAW
(to nobody in particular)
That'd be Roy Bob Malone's grand-son, his mother's a Crittenden.

CUT TO:

EMMETT

He sits alone, looking away from them, a faint smile on his face. Sam swoops in, sits beside him, and hugs him...

SAM
Hey, Emmett.

EMMETT
You looked real good.

SAM
Why does she have to <u>do</u> that? She ruins everything.

EMMETT
She's a Mom. She's just doin her job. How do you feel when you're not bein mad?

SAM
I feel like I could fly!

Sam regards Emmett a second; we sense a closeness between them that goes deeper than speech: something in her that needs his permission...

SAM
(continued)
You okay?

He nods.

She jumps up and vanishes into the crowd of young people streaming by.

CLOSE: EMMETT

Emmett sits, alone... Seeing into some private vision:

TITLE SEQUENCE

TREE FULL OF BIRDS

It is the same landscape and light as the skyfull of white birds, and these are the same kind of birds, so packed in the tree it is white with them.

SUPERIMPOSE MAIN CREDITS...AS:

The tree mysteriously silently explodes with a flash (music plays OVER throughout: Stevie Wonder, "Yesteryear"). The white birds fly up and fill the sky with birds again, but with more flashes of explosions darkening the vision...And through the sky of birds we begin slowly to SEE Sam running towards us; she's in jogging shorts, wears a Walkman, but she runs rather than jogs; she has too much energy to hold herself down to a jog. VERY LONG LENS SHOT SO THOUGH SHE RUNS SHE SEEMS TO MOVE VERY LITTLE, AS THOUGH SOME INVISIBLE SHIELD IMPEDED HER PROGRESS. When this LAP DISSOLVE from birds to Sam is finished, we CUT TO OTHER ANGLES OF SAM RUNNING WHILE FINISHING CREDITS.

We are SEEING the town of Hopewell as Sam runs through it, setting the frame of the story. (Time has passed.) She runs down Main Street past the courthouse and under big old elms toward the Dairy Queen. Lonnie slows down as he passes her in his beat up van with one door wired on. He drives along beside her

LONNIE
You gonna see Emmett this morning?

SAM
(running)
He's at the Dairy-Queen.

LONNIE
Tell him Daddy says they're hirin on at the tire plant today.

SAM
Emmett will say 'fuck the tire plant.'

LONNIE
Well, I told you, that's all I can do now. See you later...

He drives along beside her, waiting for.... She turns and pantomimes a kiss to him, but doesn't stop running. He pulls away; we HOLD WITH SAM.

She passes new houses going up in a subdivision: the framers all stop to watch her run past, cheerfully shouting to her "Keep them legs pumping, honey." And similar strokes of mid-America small town reality; pretty place where everyone knows everyone, and are both easily intimate and carefully respectful of others' privacy; where reticence and propriety co-exist comfortably with avid gossip and prying curiosity. Sam doesn't care.

DAIRY-QUEEN

As the LAST CREDIT FADES, Sam is running into the parking lot of this place which sits in the crotch of a Y junction of two tree shaded streets. It is an old neatly painted frame building that was probably once a house.

As she runs past the window of the place we SEE Emmett sitting in a booth, sipping coffee, thinking.

INT DAIRY-QUEEN - DAY

She "hi's" the kids behind the counter, and stops at Emmett's booth. She automatically takes the cigarette he's smoking out of his hand and puts it out. As automatically, he gets out another, lights it, and goes on smoking; it's a ritual with them - they don't even talk about it. And a running gag throughout the picture. As she sits...

SAM
I saw Lonnie on the way over, he says his Dad says they're hiring at the tire plant. Is that a Denver omelette?

She reaches over to eat from his plate..

EMMETT
Fuck the tire plant.

SAM
(tasting his food)
S'good. S'what I'll have. Fuck the tire plant.

PETE SIMMS and **TOM HUDSON**, Viet Nam veterans of Emmett's age slip into the booth.

PETE
You let her use that language around you at home, Emmett?

EMMETT
It's on HBO.

PETE
You let her watch HBO? Hell, I wouldn't let my wife watch HBO. You care if I set next to you, Sam? I won't bite.

Pete slips in next to Sam; Tom sits across from her. Tom is athletic and radiates a smiling strength, rolls his sleeves like Springsteen. He moves with a slight stiffness, from a war wound. She does not know Tom well.

SAM
I'll let you set here if you show me your tattoo.

PETE
Emmett. You dog. You told her my dark secret? Come on out to my truck and I'll show you.

SAM
I wonder if anyone ever tattooed his own face on his chest, like a face on a T-shirt.

Tom looks up at her, interested, and smiles.

PETE
Emmett, how come this long-legged little niece of yours is here? What's her trouble?

Tom looks up again, looking for an answer. She sees his look, glances away.

EMMETT
Ants in her pants.

SAM
That's not nice.

EARL, another vet of their regular group sits. Earl is man full of deep rage he goes to great lengths to hide from the world and from himself, but all the world knows...

EARL
Buddy Mangrum ain't comin. His little girl taken sick again -- eggs over easy, bacon, a lot of coffee, hon -- her gut's twisted round on itself. He blames it on Agent Orange.

SAM
What's that?

PETE
They used to spray over there in Viet Nam, to take the leaves off'n the trees, so the VC couldn't hide out, but it wasn't no big deal. Smelled sweet.

SAM
(to Emmett)
Did you get Agent Orange over there?

TOM
Why, is somethin wrong with Emmett?

This is like a joke: everyone knows Emmett is eccentric. Emmett amiably ignores it.

SAM
He gets headaches, he can't sleep, he's got these rashes. He's a wreck. Emmett, don't be macho and pretend.

PETE
I had a place come on my leg, all brown and funny? But it went away. You reckon it just ate on down to the bone?

TOM
Nothing can hurt you, Pete. You're like that guy on TV that ate a bicycle.

SAM
That was on "That's Incredible." I saw that.

TOM
Didn't hurt him much. He was gonna go on up to Canada and eat a helicopter.

Sam looks at him very carefully. He looks back at her with bland self assurance. Through the following her eyes remain fixed on Tom, thinking about him. While...

EMMETT
I think it's just I got fleas. The cat's got fleas and he sleeps right on my head.

SAM
If I had a car I'd drive you on down to the VA and get you checked out for Agent Orange.

EARL
You think the government is going jump up and clap hands because some doctor says Agent Orange? They ain't gonna admit shit. It'd cost billions, and every lazy son of a bitch that don't like to work would be claiming they got Agent Orange, to get a pension. And they can't sue; you can't sue the government.

There is moment of silence at Earl's outburst, but they're used to him, too. Tom covers...

TOM
I got a car I'll sell you. VW bug. Fix it up real good, let you have it for six thousand dollars.
(he's teasing)

While watching Tom fixedly, Sam has sneaked water from her glass into Emmett's ashtray, so when he puts his cigarette down it will go out.

EMMETT
Sam. Don't let him get you that way. It's a '73 somebody wrecked on their way back from the Hollow.

TOM
Give you a bargain. Let you have it for six hundred dollars. What I paid for it. I'll fix it up for you.

SAM
I don't know where I can round up that much cash.

Pete has been out of the conversation for too long... he's beginning to feel left out.

PETE
You want to see my tattoo, Sam?

SAM
Okay. But not in your truck.

Pete lifts his T-shirt. On his chest he has a map of the Jackson Purchase area of western Kentucky tattooed in red, outlined in blue; his house and his street are picked out in accentuated perspective. As they all lean over to look, the waitress stops by and watches too.

PETE
There's my street. Thing that looks like a ladybug is my old Corvette. My wife sold it while I was gone. Be a classic now. I look at it upside down, and in the mirror it's backward. This was maybe the stupidest thing I ever did in my life.

He laughs and pulls down his T-shirt.

SAM
(to Tom)
Nobody can eat a helicopter. You don't know how to lie.

CUT TO:

EXT DAIRY-QUEEN - DAY

Doors slamming on cars and pickups. Sam and Emmett are walking, Tom slides by...

TOM
You think about that VW, Sam. Come over and take a test drive and teach me how to lie.

He drives away; Pete waves as he goes...

SAM
That true what you told me about Pete chasing his wife with a shotgun?

EMMETT
No. It was her chased him.

SAM
Why?

EMMETT
Why? Why? Why does everything have to have a reason?

SAM
Because it does.

EMMETT
Some things don't; some things just are. Some things you can't do nothing about.

SAM
I don't accept that.

EMMETT
He had a Viet Nam map and she tore it down because it didn't fit her decorating scheme, and one thing led to another. Tell the truth I think ol' Pete liked it over there.

SAM
Did you?

EMMETT
You out of your mind?

SAM
What do you remember when you think about it? First thing!

EMMETT
Leave it alone, Sam. How come you have to know all about 'Nam?

SAM
All I asked is what your first thought is.

Emmett walks in thought a second.

EMMETT
Them birds. There was these little white birds, followed the water buffalo, there'd be one with every buffalo, like a pet, pickin insects off the buffalo's head, hell, get right inside their mouth and pick their teeth. One time there was this tree full of birds, and a grenade blew it all to hell, and the birds flew out so it was like snowing up instead of down. These beautiful birds just goin on about their business, with all that crazy stuff goin on around them. Egrets. I'd like to see one of them egrets again.

Emmett has fallen inside himself with this reminiscence; he jumps as Lonnie swings in beside them in his van...

LONNIE
Hey, Emmett. Sam, you wanna come with me? I got somethin to talk about...

EMMETT
You go on...
(as he sees
she hesitates)
...go on! I want to walk alone.
She's pestering me, take her out of
here, Lonnie.

SAM
Boy, you're in a mood!

EMMETT
Well, that's a good reason to be
alone, isn't it?

Hurt, Sam climbs into the van...

INT VAN - DAY (MOVING SHOT)

Sam watches Emmett in the rear view mirror, as they drive away.

SAM
Why aren't you at work?

LONNIE
I quit.

SAM
Oh, shit.

LONNIE
Got there this morning, and I
looked in Quinnie's face and I
thought I don't want to look like
him in thirty years, so I told him
I quit. He says fine because we
don't need you. Wouldn't that burn
your ass?

He looks at her, waiting for a reaction. When there is none...

LONNIE
Box boy, that ain't for me. I'd
like to do somethin outdoors, where
I'm my own boss.

SAM
You're your own boss now, alright.

LONNIE
Mama and Daddy will have a fit. I forgot; I was supposed to tell you to come to my brother's wedding. You got to be formal.

We have been close on Sam during this; she has been growing progressively more anxious to get away from this conversation.

SAM
Formal!

LONNIE
It's a theme wedding, everybody is coming in jeeps.

SAM
Formal in jeeps? Where am I supposed to get a formal dress? Everything needs money! I've got to find a job.

LONNIE
You going to move up to your Momma's?

SAM
I don't feel like I can leave Emmett.

LONNIE
You know what people say about him?

SAM
Yes, I know what they say about everything in Hopewell; this town never shuts up.

LONNIE
They think he's a dope dealer. Some of 'em think he's gay. Some think he's sleepin with you. They say he killed babies in Viet Nam.

SAM
You think I'm weird because of Emmett?

LONNIE
How come you started hangin out with Emmett's friends at the Dairy Queen?

SAM
I was thinking about that preacher at graduation, talking about being strong, and ready to fight, and how my father went over there, and he was just our age, or real close. It made me think. My Daddy went over and died there for my future, and Emmett went for Mom and me, to get revenge. And look what happened to them.

LONNIE
I don't like the idea of you hanging around with a bunch of veterans.

SAM
What do you think they're going to do? Snap and hold me hostage?
(no answer)
Lonnie, if you're planning on joining the Army instead of getting a job, you might ask my opinion first.

LONNIE
(changing the subject)
I don't know. You're not weird -- you just think you are. You're only about half weird.

SAM
I feel like doing something really weird.

She kisses him, so he laughs, and like a puppy starts to kiss back, so she laughs.

SAM
Later. Let me out, Lonnie. I want to run.

CUT TO:

INT: THE HOUSE - DAY

It is a two-story frame house, surrounded by trees and nondescript grass. It is haphazardly maintained by Emmett, using makeshift and often ingenious solutions to problems: a shower faucet that broke off might be repaired by setting a pliers that clamp on the stem, and tightening the clamp - so the pliers become the 'new' handle. It is cluttered -- like a house occupied for two years by an adult who doesn't care about neatness, and a teen-ager. Things tend to be left where they were used until they are needed again, carried to kitchen and washed (if necessary) and used again.

Dawn Goodwin (whom we saw at the Graduation) and Sam are in the kitchen, where Dawn is piercing Sam's ears.

CLOSE: DAWN

Sam sits, a bag of ice cubes held to her ear. Dawn stands beside her with a big needle. She pulls the ice away and stabs the needle through the lobe of Sam's ear with a sudden movement. Sam shrieks.

DAWN
There, got you by surprise.

SAM
It didn't hurt that much.
(she's lying)

Dawn has four sets of earrings; we will discover Sam is now getting her second set of earholes. During this, they clean up, fix a post in the new hole, and Dawn chatters...

CLOSE: SAM IN MIRROR

Examining the damage.

DAWN (V.O.)
Is your mother going to shit bricks over the second holes?

SAM
No. I do anything I want to. My uncle lets me do anything I want to. Lonnie slept over three nights since he quit his job.

DAWN
My Dad would shit bricks if I did something like that. He thinks he has to act strict to show he loves me.

SAM
When my Mom got pregnant last year she ran me right off to the doctor to get the pill. She didn't even ask me.

DAWN
Aren't you afraid of the side effects of those things?

SAM
Having a baby is a pretty big side effect. More like a front effect!

DAWN
I'm late, but it doesn't mean anything.

SAM
How late?

DAWN
It's been this late before. Do you want to marry Lonnie?

SAM
Oh, God! I have to go formal to his brother's wedding. Help me with something...

She leads Dawn toward the stairs. Meanwhile, en route...

SAM
Lonnie's not my main thought in life right now. I can't afford to buy a dress for this thing.

INT IRENE'S OLD ROOM - DAY

As the girls enter. It is as Irene, Sam's mother left it, her old things, out of fashion, or memorabilia she decided didn't fit in her new life are where she put them down and forgot. Odd cartons and the broken vacuum Emmett hasn't got round to repairing, etc., suggest to us this room goes unused.

Sam will head for closets and begin to dig through old dresses, and they begin to try the old things on.

DAWN
God! Great! Look at this stuff! It's like a museum!

She's found a dress she remembered as being terrific: usable for the wedding: as she looks at it she can only laugh. It's a leftover from the sixties, Indian print or tie-dye or somesuch.

SAM
This was never in style. Look at it. Oh, God I'm going to have dig up some money for a dress to wear one time.

DAWN
Look at all her old records. Do you listen to them? Look at this! Who the hell are Ferrante & Teicher?

SAM
(still looking at clothes)
She's off having babies in Lexington, and driving around with the top down and the easy listening on the car radio, with Lorenzo Jones.

DAWN
Who's Lorenzo Jones?

SAM
That's what I call her husband. I guess she thinks he treats her good.

She flops on the bed, irritated by her life to the point of desperation.

SAM
(cont'd)
How late?

DAWN
A week.

Sam might cry. Dawn has found a box of letters and pictures, etc., which she burrows into with the curiosity of a cat.

SAM
Lorenzo only wants to watch the news and then he talks all the way through it so you can't hear.

DAWN
Who's this? This looks like Lonnie, only what's he doing in a uniform?

She has an old black and white 5x7 photo... Sam looks: she hasn't seen these particular pictures before.

SAM
That's my Dad!

DAWN
He looks <u>exactly</u> like Lonnie! The same age and everything.

Sam is digging through...getting excited.

SAM
He was. He died over there just before I was born. I never knew she had this stuff... these are letters!

DAWN
Can we read them?

She begins to open one - Sam snatches it away.

SAM
God, <u>no</u>!

DAWN
Why?

SAM
I don't know.
(to the picture)
Look at him! God, he missed everything, he missed the moon-landing, he missed Watergate, the assassination.

DAWN
Which assassination? He wasn't that old...?

SAM
John Lennon.
(to Dawn)
You know what I wish we could do? Steal the keys to your brother's car and drive over to the Paducah Oaks mall in sexy outfits and hang out in those bars where the businessmen go. I bet we could get them to give us money.

DAWN
This town is dead without a mall.

A HONK outside.

DAWN
(continued)
That's Kenny...

She gets up to go...

SAM
Does he know?

DAWN
I don't even know, do I? I'm just late.
(shouting)
I'm coming! God!

Sam picks up Moon Pie and tells him:

SAM
We're the baddest girls in Hopewell.

Dawn exits.

Sam picks up the letters and takes them to the bed.

She lays out the pictures and the letters all around her, in a careful pattern. She takes one out and examines it, smells it, but can't bring herself to read it...

INT KITCHEN NIGHT

The TV is going with MTV (or M*A*S*H or syndicated sitcoms, as always in this house). Down the hall we SEE Emmett playing Pac-Man on his Atari, the electronic boops going very fast. He leans over the screen, intent, his face lighted by the video display.

The refrigerator door opens and floods light into the dim house; Sam gets Pepsi and junk food out... she automatically gets a beer, pops the top and as she passes Emmett sets it down by him. She checks his score on the video screen and leaves. Emmett plays on.

INT. SAM'S ROOM NIGHT

Sam lays the food out around her, touching the letters. Making a ritual out of this.

She eats, picks up a letter and again puts it back down. She looks at Dwayne's picture...

At last she begins to read...

DWAYNE'S
VOICE
The guys here were as excited as I was, I danced all around and they poured beer on me, when I got the letter. But I'm not drinkin any of that beer. I really don't want to name it Darrell. That was the name of a guy in my outfit who isn't with us anymore, and I'd feel like it was unlucky to name him Darrell.

EXT HOPEWELL STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

The same very long lens shot of Sam running we used in the titles. She runs, straining and faster and faster...

DWAYNE (V.O.)
...Bill and Bob are too ordinary. My favorite name is Samuel. It's from the Bible. I wish you didn't have to go through this by yourself. Don't ask me to tell you how it is here. You don't want to know...I guess if it's a girl you could call it Samantha.

A Huey attack helicopter flies right out of a skyfull of fire toward us...

Under it, suspended between the landing gear is a naked man, bending down from the waist, his face toward us, agonized, his arms flung wide, as though he were crucified upside down.

He is carried right up to us so we see his face as he goes on past. It is Emmett/Dwayne/Lonnie. And then he is gone. We are seeing Sam's imagination at work on her half knowledge of the war, and all tangled up with her own problems of identity and of yearning to be free.

CLOSE: SAM (IN HER ROOM IN REAL TIME AND PLACE) - DARK

She lies in bed, surrounded by the letters, some still unopened... She stares into the dark, thinking. She picks up the phone...dials...

LARRY (O.S.)
This is Larry and Irene, business is good, life is great, and we look forward to your terrific message at the beep...
(beep)

SAM
Mom? I was looking for a dress to wear to Lonnie's brother's wedding, and I found Daddy's old letters to you. Why didn't you take them with you? If I loved somebody, I wouldn't just leave their letters all around!

She tries to go on, but anger chokes her throat; she can't speak. She starts to hang up but then another wave of feeling catches her...

SAM
You never told me you wanted a boy. You never told me anything. I don't even know how he died!

She hangs up and begins to cry.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - DAY

A dog is raising hell about a big old model car riding on it's axles, jammed with overweight adults and children, that has turned into the drive.

Emmett is standing in the yard, watching. The dog is roaring and leaping at the car; the driver winds his window up a little in fear the dog is coming right in.

DRIVER
Hey, call your dog off so we can get out. I want to talk to you.

EMMETT
It ain't my dog.

DRIVER
(as though this explained everything)
I want to talk to you about Jesus.

EMMETT
I told you he ain't my dog. He leaves me alone and I don't tell him what to do.

DRIVER
Does he bite?

Sam emerges and sits down on the front stoop to enjoy Emmett playing his guerrilla theater.

EMMETT
If you got true faith, you won't be afraid to find out. You'll just get right on out here and trust to the Lord to tell that dog what to do. Come on...
(as the dog gets even crazier)
...God will be your shield. You just got to have faith.

DRIVER
You're mocking me. The fire is waiting. ..and they mocked Him, spit upon him! Matthew 27:29...before they crucified Him!

He is trying to back the car around, the dog barking and rasing hell, the Driver sweating mightily with his three tons of old car and a ton of flesh.

EMMETT
"If ye be the King of Israel, now come on down from the Cross, and we will believe..." Matthew 27:42.

The car rides majestically out of the yard into the road like a barge in heavy weather. Sam laughs.

EMMETT
You'd think they'd have faith in their own product. Damn poor sales pitch.

The dog is perfectly quiet now, sniffing around and lifting its leg.

EMMETT
(continued)
Go on home, Daniel! You're possessed of the Devil!

The dog obeys instantly, trotting off to a neighbor's yard.

SAM
If I had faith I'd have a car and a good job. I'd drive to California.

EMMETT
You aiming to desert me?

SAM
Mom wants me to move to Lexington with her and go to college.

EMMETT
You could get a job here, and go to Murray State.

SAM
I'd need a car to commute. A person needs a car to be free. Emmett, did you know about these?

She gives him the bundle of letters: he looks at them like they were some strange extinct species of fish just hauled up from the bottom of the sea.

EMMETT
Oh, those. Irene left them here?

SAM
You read them?

EMMETT
She gave them to me a long time ago.

SAM
He writes like a kid.

EMMETT
That was us, little kids out in the jungle, didn't know diddley shit.

SAM
I can't read it all - some of it's klicks and Hueys and boonies and bouncing betties and I don't understand it. You could explain it to me.

EMMETT
You ain't never gonna understand it, nobody is, who wasn't there.

But he can't resist, and opens the packet, looking at the pictures... He lifts the bundle to his nose and smells it.

EMMETT
You know, I never even really knew him that well.

SAM

Watching him. He is reading. She might speak, but decides to leave well enough alone, now that he's...

EMMETT

Reading. A picture falls out. He looks at it. He looks up for a moment, trying to control emotions that rise like a storm... Sam is quietly leaving and doesn't see this.

CUT TO:

EXT: THE HOUSE - NIGHT

It is very dark and sticky; thunder mutters in the distance. The airconditioner drums, and drips. Lonnie's van clatters into the yard, and Lonnie jumps down, six-pac in hand. Sam appears in the bright doorway. The first heavy raindrops begin to fall... Lonnie runs for the door... The engine of the van bucks along, running raggedly in short bursts for awhile before it finally dies.

SAM
When are you going to fix that?

LONNIE
I'll get around to it. There's a tornado watch on.

INT THE HOUSE - NIGHT

As she lets Lonnie in and the screendoor slaps shut. Emmett appears in the doorway from the kitchen. He is wearing a long, thin Indian print skirt with elephants and peacocks on it.

LONNIE
I saw a cop on I-24 and I was going 65.
(laughs as he sees Emmett)

EMMETT
Hey, I'm makin muffelatas, y'all. You want one, Lonnie?

LONNIE
I don't mind. Have a beer, Emmett, good buddy. Where'd you get that skirt?

SAM
It's a joke because Klinger wears dresses on MASH.

LONNIE
You buckin for a Section Eight out of Hopewell?

EMMETT
Tried ever'thing else.

He does a little dance, with a silly smile.

LONNIE
Far out. Here, girl, have a beer.

SAM
Where'd you get these?

LONNIE
From the bootlegger. It was storming down at the Bottom, and I didn't want to wait around to find somebody to go in for me.

Emmett has turned back to cooking. The storm breaks, now, with gusts of wind and heavy rain, lightning... Lonnie and Sam sit down in the living room. The TV is going but they ignore it...Lonnie kisses her.

SAM
(kissing him)
I'm still sore about what you said about Emmett. I thought you liked him; you always acted like you did.

LONNIE
(kissing her)
I like him fine. But he ain't always playin with a full deck. How long you gonna go on keepin house for him?

SAM
My mother has enrolled in psych-ology in college up in Lexington. She's got an answer for everything, now. She wants me to come and go to college with her, this fall.

Emmett enters and passes the joint he's smoking to them; during the following he will dish up muffelatas... He's heard only the last line...

EMMETT
Tell her she can't go to school where her mother's goin to school, Lonnie. That's weird.

LONNIE
You see? You can't go, both of us want you here.

SAM
What are you going to do now you know you don't want to be a box boy?

LONNIE
I don't know yet. Daddy's been pushin that electrician idea, but with all this anti-nuclear they're
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

LONNIE
shutting down plants and the cost of electricity is gonna go sky-high, so people can't afford to build, so they won't need wiring. I don't see the future in it.

SAM
If they aren't going to build houses where are all the new people going to go?

LONNIE
Go home and live with their parents. Like me.

He is disgusted with himself and the situation...

EMMETT
Only reason for a job is a family; if you don't have a family you shouldn't take a job away from a man that does.

SAM
Wow, Emmett. That's neat; you got the unemployment problem all worked out. Including your own.

EMMETT
Show me a job worth doing. A hell of a lot of them aren't even right. I can't work in a plant that's polluting.

SAM
Oh, Christ, there are jobs you can do without hurting somebody, Emmett. You could be a disc jockey. Get into video games; run an arcade and play Pac-Man all day for free. Jello wrestling. You could coach a team of women who wrestle in a ring full of jello. You could rake in money; people are crazy about jello wrestling. If you play your cards right the women would let you get in the jello with them, after work.

EMMETT
Talk to Sam, Lonnie, you can't live with her since she graduated and faced life.

SAM
Did you read those letters?

Emmett's mood changes: he is suddenly evasive...

EMMETT
From Dwayne?

SAM
(impatient)
My father's letters.

EMMETT
Yeah, I read 'em. Eat up before they get cold.

SAM
Well, is that what it was like?

EMMETT
They don't say much, do they? Socrates wore a toga. All them Greeks and Romans wore dresses. It's healthier for a man to wear a skirt, you ain't all cramped up and stuff.

He gets up and moves about restlessly.

EMMETT
You'd oughta burn 'em. Just forget all that damn shit! Sam. Prying into something you ain't never going to understand. Just leave it alone!

The thunder is close now. Emmett acts like he's in pain. Sam and Lonnie stare at him... Sam astonished, a little frightened at the depth of pain the letters have stirred up.

SAM
Well what was in them to make you feel so bad? Emmett? They were mostly just love letters...

The storm breaks with full fury...shaking the house. The lights flicker, a window shutter bangs in the furious wind.

They jump up to rush around the house to close things, unplugging appliances.

HALLWAY

Lonnie and Sam find themselves alone for second...Lonnie kisses her, she allows him to go on, but her mind is elsewhere...

SAM
Why does he have to make a mystery of it?

Lightning shows us Emmett sitting on the stairs his hands over his ears, ducked down, his face twisted with pain.

LONNIE
Incoming, Emmett, watch your ass, buddy!

The thunderclap shakes the house. In a flicker of more distant lightning they see Emmett looking up, taking a toke of his joint and grinning at them evilly.

SAM
You all right, Emmett?

LONNIE
Don't you go kicking the bucket without makin out your will first.

The storm rises to even more fury; a great roaring wind...the lightning is almost continuous, like the strobes on a rock dance floor...

The lights go out.

IN THE DARK

SAM
Wow! What is this? A tornado?

EMMETT
This is no tornado. They don't have tornados at night... this is a weird climatic event.

He gets up suddenly, and walks boldly out into the storm...

EXT HOUSE - NIGHT (STORM)

Emmett stands in the yard, beneath the trees that thrash and roar in the torrents of rain and wind, the lightning flashing over him, the wet skirt clinging to his legs...

Sam and Lonnie look out at him... (He is playing this scene to them).

SAM
Get in here, you damn fool!

EMMETT
Hell, no, Sam. I'm havin it out with this old Bastard, once for all!
(to the storm)
Don't send me Your salesmen bustin in my yard! Show Your face! In person! Let me see You. Show me! Show me!

The storm increases in violence in direct proportion to his Lear-like ranting. Sam cringes at the bolts of lightning. Emmett laughs... Lonnie laughs at Emmett...

Emmett begins to climb up into the tallest tree, struggling up to the highest limb that will support him, where he is whipped back and forth by the gale.

He laughs down at them. Raises his arm to the lightning... Lonnie cheers him on.

LONNIE
Go for it, Emmett, you fucker!

ON EMMETT

As he is whipped through the gale by the wind...

EMMETT
Go on, damn it! Kill me! Love me or kill me, one! Show me You care!

Sam is frightened and appalled.

Abruptly the storm stops, the front is passed. The wind drops to zero; the sudden silence is punctuated only by the drip of water from the trees.

THE LIGHTS IN THE HOUSE COME BACK ON

INSIDE, THE TELEVISION RESUMES A BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN MTV.

Emmett, soaked, drops his upraised arm. He grins.

EMMETT
I was afraid of that.

He slithers down the wet tree trunk, drops to the ground, and moves past them into the house, suddenly drained of energy, depressed.

EMMETT
Burn them damn letters, Sam.
There's nothin in them for you.

CUT TO:

INT SAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

We HEAR sounds of digging, a pickaxe hitting rocks, a shovel against concrete; sunlight streams into the room. CAMERA finds Dwayne's picture near Lonnie's in the mirror; then it finds Sam and Lonnie in bed. Sam sleepily wakes up, reacting to noise, then wakes Lonnie, who springs out of bed... reacting to the time...

LONNIE
Can I use the bathroom first? I'm 'opposed to pick up Daddy, his battery's dead, oh, shit!

Sam goes to the window to look out...

INT/EXT HOUSE - DAY

Sam looks out on the world... Everything is still wet from the storm, but the sun shines and it's peaceful in total contrast to the violence of the night before.

Emmett is stripped to the waist and is digging at the foundations of the house. He is wearing a Walkman. His face is red and he's sweating... Through a gap in a hedge, the neighbor, MRS BIGGS watches.

MS BIGGS
What are you doing, digging down to China?

EMMETT
What I'm doing is excavating, Mrs Biggs. It's noble work. The Egyptians and the Romans were great excavators and great builders.

SAM
(from her window)
Come on, Emmett, I never seen you work like that before.

EMMETT
(looking up)
The basement is full of water from last night. I got to find the leak, or the whole thing is gonna fall in.

MRS BIGGS
That cat messed in my petunias again.

EMMETT
That's good fertilizer, Mrs Biggs, Moon Pie's got high quality fertilizer, so you can have champion petunias.

Lonnie, dressed, his hair wet and carelessly patted into place, comes charging out of the front door, and grins at Emmett as he strides to his van. Mrs Biggs' day is made.

LONNIE
Emmett, you look real good with a sweat on you. Mrs Biggs.

He leaps into the van and starts it, and drives off, as...

EMMETT
(to Mrs Biggs)
Did the storm get you last night?

MRS BIGGS
Isn't that the boy won the Libertyville game with all them jump shots?

SAM
(from her window)
Yes, Ma'am. Lonnie the Jumper.

MRS BIGGS
You goin to marry him?

Emmett stops digging and looks up at Sam...listening for her answer.

EMMETT
Are you?

SAM
Am I what?

EMMETT
Going to marry him. He can't pour piss out of a boot, you know.

SAM
I don't know, Emmett. How do I know what I'm going to do until I do it?

CUT TO:

EXT HOPEWELL TOWN SQUARE - DAY

It is decorated for flag day; booths and table displays out with merchandise, etc. Music blares from the clock tower. Dawn and Sam walk through the crowd, picking over the junk...

DAWN
Three weeks.

SAM
And counting. Have you told Ken?

DAWN
I don't dare.

SAM
Will your Daddy kill you if you have to get married?

DAWN
He wouldn't want to lose his housekeeper. He tries to set a good example, but if it wasn't for me he'd find some woman and just go wild. What? What did you see?

Sam has seen Tom across the street in a camouflage outfit, the sleeves rolled up; he looks strong and cheerful and sexy. Dawn sees him now...

DAWN
Who's that? You know him?

SAM
That's Tom, he's a friend of Emmett's.

DAWN
God! The way you looked at him it turned me on!

SAM
I want to talk to him. He can get us up there in the clocktower...

DAWN
Listen, I'm not sure if this a good idea.

SAM
(sarcastic)
God. Dawn, you're so bad!

She's leading Dawn across the street to where Tom and JIM HOLLY are sitting at a folding table selling tickets to a Veteran's Dance...and collecting money for Victims of Agent Orange.

TOM
Hi, Sam.

SAM
Tom, this is my girlfriend, Dawn?

TOM
Hi, Dawn. Can we sell you something.

DAWN
Hi, listen, I was on my way to the drugstore -- Sam, I'll meet you later, in front.

But she stays...

SAM
What are you selling?

TOM
Anything you want. We got a special on tickets to the vet's dance.

JIM HOLLY
It's what I always wanted to see, like a welcome home party we never had. A lot of places had one the year they put the Viet Nam Memorial up in Washington, but nobody did a thing here.

TOM
You want to bring Emmett?

SAM
He claims he can't dance. I'll give a buck to the Agent Orange thing, though...

JIM HOLLY
That's good. Buddy Mangrum's kid needs surgery to untwist her gut, and the damn V.A. won't give him buck one.

Sam has been signing the petition and paying the buck...Dawn is looking around, bored...the Clock Tower is playing Sinatra or whatever.

SAM
(to Tom)
Come on with me to the Courthouse. There's somethin I want to look for and I need some help...

DAWN
(to Sam)
You're not.

SAM
I am.

Sam reaches and takes his hand drawing him toward the clocktower.

TOM
Where are you taking me, Sam?

She drops her hand from his...

SAM
I want to go up in the clocktower. I want to see where Emmett flew the Viet Cong flag that time.

TOM
I almost forgot that. Emmett damn near got lynched. He was a lot wilder then.

INT COURT TOWER STAIRS - DAY

They are climbing up, Tom following. The twisting steps get narrower and narrower.

SAM
What color's the Viet Cong flag?

Before he can answer a woman pokes her head out of a doorway:

WOMAN
Can I help y'all?

SAM
I wanted to show my friend the clocktower...?

The Woman examines Tom, sees he's a veteran and adult...

WOMAN
They got the top part fenced off, you can't get up there.

SAM
Where's the music coming from?

WOMAN
Oh they got a p.a. system setup back of the prothonotary's office, next floor up.

TOM
Much obliged.

They proceed up the narrow twisting staircase...

TOM
What's goin on, Sam?

SAM
I guess they don't want anybody flying any more Viet Cong flags.

TOM
You don't have that flag somewhere on you, do you?

SAM
I never saw it, I just heard about it.

They've reached the locked off tower top; a small door opens off of the stair; below, the town square is spread out. In these tight quarters they are very close together. Suddenly aware of each others' bodies.

TOM
Emmett's a character but he's probably not easy to live with.

He is leaning with one hand against the wall behind her; she is a little breathless. He is easy, smiling at her...

SAM
I'm used to him. Why do you think he flew that flag? Was it treason like some people said, or just to stir people up?

Tom leans his other hand on the wall; she is against the wall between his arms...

TOM
Why don't you ask him?

SAM
I'm afraid to.

TOM
What are you afraid of, Sam?

SAM
I'm afraid he might flashback. He's... I got a friend who thinks he might snap.

TOM
Lonnie Malone.

SAM
Yes, sir.

TOM
What do you think Lonnie Malone knows about anything like that? Y'all gonna get married?

SAM
No.

TOM
I heard you were gonna get married in September.

SAM
You heard wrong.

He leans back against the opposite wall, taking his hands down, but somehow her awareness of his body only increases...

SAM
Why don't you get married? Why don't any of the vets I know get along with women?

TOM
Ask Emmett. And I never said I didn't like women.

SAM
You have a girlfriend?

TOM
No.
(before she can ask)
Maybe I'm too choosy.

SAM
How'd you get wounded?

TOM
Me and this piece of shrapnel tried to occupy the same space at the same time.

SAM
See, that's what I mean, sarcastic, it's so hard to ever get an answer to anything.

TOM
Sam, you might as well stop asking questions about the war. Nobody cares.

SAM
I do. My Daddy died over there, I want to know what happened to him. Nobody will tell me anything.

TOM
Well, you weren't there so you can't understand it.

SAM
You're as bad as Emmett.

TOM
(changing the subject)
What are we doing up here?

Sam grins. She pulls out a tape from her pocket. She opens the door...inside is a small room with a p.a. system playing tapes. There's no one here... she darts inside.

TOM
What is it?

SAM
Wait, wait, wait...

She's checking out the equipment to see if there's a cassette player connected, finds it, and as Tom smokes, amused, she slips her tape in, finds the right switches and then, facing him, holding her finger to her lips flips the switch...

BLASTING OUT OVER THE TOWN: JERRY LEE LEWIS' INSPIRED PRIMAL SCREAMING TAKES OVER FROM SINATRA...

Tom laughs, grabs her and they head out into the..

OPEN STAIRWELL

They start to look down, but realize they'll be recognized. They duck down. Laughing to beat hell. They are very close together. Aware.

TOM
You're cute.

SAM
No. Emmett stood up. For whatever it was he believed...he wasn't afraid.

Sam stands up in full sight...Tom hangs back, smiling at her, liking her spunk, but happy to stay out of the line of fire.

SAM

Standing at the rail, looking down, waving to the crowd below, long slow waves...

HER P.O.V.

The town full of people just going on about their business. Jerry Lee Lewis raves on...ignored.

EXT SQUARE - DAY

Tom and Sam exit the townhall, and Tom heads for his table, laughing at her...

SAM
Look at these people? What does it take to wake them up?

TOM
You tell me when you want that VW, Sam, I'll be workin on it...

SAM
I don't have the money for that!

TOM
Well, maybe you will. I want you to have it.

Sam and Dawn meet...

DAWN
I never thought you'd have the nerve!

SAM
These people are the walking dead. Let's go to the drugstore.

DAWN
I already got it. How old is he?

SAM
I don't know, thirty-four...

DAWN
God, that's old!

Jerry Lee is silenced in mid roar. Silence. Then Sinatra resumes "doing it my way."

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE - DAY

The two girls are in Sam's bedroom. They perform this pregnancy test with deep seriousness, with ritual respect for the feminine mysteries, and frequent reference to the instructions, both on the box and the folder that came in it.

Outside we can HEAR the sounds of shovel and pickaxe.

Sam waits, with the test tube and paraphernalia ready. We HEAR the toilet flush. Dawn appears with a glass full of piss, which she puts down. She watches as Sam uses the eyedropper to suck up a small quantity. Sam squeezes the bulb so exactly one drop goes into the tube.

They both watch, eyes inches from the tube.

Nothing.

DAWN
What's the date on that thing?

She reads it, tosses the box off into a corner and flops back on the bed staring at the ceiling.

HOLD CLOSE ON SAM WATCHING THE TUBE

SAM
It could be wrong. If it's positive, I'll buy another. I'll pay for it.

The tube turns a deep crimson. Sam involuntarily makes a noise; Dawn jumps into the FRAME, their faces regarding the tube. Sam compares it to the color chart. Pregnant.

Dawn flops back on the bed,

DAWN
(to the ceiling)
I always wanted this to be a happy time.

SAM
If it happens why don't we just go away, you could have the baby in Florida and we could work at Disney world.

DAWN
I've always played Mommy. I'm sick of playing Mommy. I want to play Daddy. No. I want to play Las Vegas. Oh, God, is that the right time? I got to go.

They turn to inspect the tube: still the same.

DAWN
Carswell is going to murder me, he's a mean boss. Thanks. See you.

SAM
Later.

And Dawn is gone. Sam starts to gather up the pieces of the kit. Finds herself facing the picture of Dwayne in the mirror.

SAM
(to him)
You were just a country boy. You never knew me.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - DAY

Emmett slaves away: by now there are giant piles of dirt; one whole side and going round the corner is exposed down five or six feet. Cracks run here and there; wet from water leaking back out of the basement. He stands in water. Sam comes out of the house and looks.

SAM
Jesus! Could it fall down?

EMMETT
(dramatically)
Yep. You take a structural weakness, a couple cracks, one thing leads to another, and then DOMINO! it all falls apart. When you least expect it.

SAM
(provocat-
ively)
I'm going to go see Anita Stevens.

There is the slightest change in the rhythm of his shovelling. He tries a couple more shovelfuls then gives up to candor: he stops and leans against the side of his excavation and grins up at her.

EMMETT
Don't play cupid.

SAM
I like Anita. I don't see what's wrong with her.

EMMETT
There's nothing wrong with her.

He resumes shovelling.

She is running; as she goes out of sight, Emmett stops and leans on his shovel staring down at his feet; we can't see his face. Clearly Anita means something special to him.

EXT. HOPEWELL CLINIC - DAY

This is a small hospital/emergency clinic, where **ANITA STEVENS** works as a nurse. It is over a row of shops, including a dress shop.

Sam is running in through a parking lot behind the building, where everyone parks; a stairway winds up the side of the building to a balcony.

INT. HOPEWELL CLINIC - DAY

As Sam jogs in through the glass doors, "hi's" the receptionist and runs down a corridor to...

FIND ANITA

Anita has long pink fingernails, a spectacular bosom, set off by a well fitted nurse's uniform. She dresses well -- she is the Princess of Hopewell. She is Emmett's age, so she better become a Queen pretty quick.

Right now she is doing some task that requires moving around the place; Sam in her stained T-shirt and running shorts follows her around, interested in whatever she's doing.

ANITA
Well, hi! What are you doing here?

SAM
Passing by.

ANITA
Yeah, I see you running everywhere. Where you going, Sam, always going so fast?

SAM
Anita? If I was to ask you...

Anita gets this all the time and has developed a way to deal with it...

ANITA
If it's you, you got to say; if it's a friend, you tell them to come see me. No crapping around. I'm not giving out drugs or free advice.

SAM
Well, gee.

ANITA
Who are you going with now, Sam. That boy that won the Libertyville game?

SAM
I don't know.

ANITA
You don't know?

SAM
I'm not thinking about Lonnie, just now. I have to tell you the name?

ANITA
Tell her to come see me.

SAM
She's late.

ANITA
You, or her, Sam?

SAM
God, I feel like it was both of us. But not me.

ANITA
(changing the subject)
How's that uncle of yours?

SAM
He's got these headaches, and skin rashes, and you know how he is, only he's a lot more so. I worry about Agent Orange.

ANITA
He's still got those headaches? Are his pimples bigger than dimes?

SAM
He says it's just acne, because his sex hormones are young.

Anita laughs with a loaded kind of laugh. History here.

SAM
He gets these crazy moods, but it's a whole lot of things, not just one thing.

ANITA
He ought to have his eyes checked. Let me get some paper and give you a skin doctor and an eye doctor I want him to see.

MOVING TWOSHOT

Anita leads her to a station where she can hunt up a pen and notepaper.

SAM
Are you going to the Veteran's dance?

ANITA
Nobody asked me.

SAM
Are you going with anybody?

ANITA
(busy writing)
I'm dating a policeman from Benton. His idea of a good time is to buy a six pac and drive a truck in a ditch. He's getting possessive. When they get that way, I have to get out. That's probably why I cared so much about Emmett, he just didn't give a damn. That made me possessive. I just had to have him.
(laughs)
I guess he's like me. I'm glad you're taking care of him.

She hands her a list of names...

SAM
Would you come over some time? I'll make Emmett make lasagna.

ANITA
I don't know that he'd want me to.

SAM
Come over and help me get him interested in that Veteran's dance. I want to go, in honor of my Daddy, but I don't want to go alone.

ANITA
Well, maybe.
(she smiles)
We'll see if Emmett remembers how to dance!

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE NIGHT

Emmett bends over the Atari, destroying enemies, the light flickering over his face. The door SLAMS O.S. Emmett doesn't look up from the game...

EMMETT
Your mother called from Lexington. She wants to know what was the big idea leaving that lousy message on her answering machine.

INT KITCHEN NIGHT

Sam is arrested in the act of getting food and drink out of the refrigerator.

SAM
I'm not ready to talk to her yet.

EMMETT (O.S.)
What was the message?

EMMETT

Intent on his game. Sam enters, puts beer down beside him.

SAM
Did you eat anything?

EMMETT
I ain't hungry.

SAM
Would you go to a doctor? Anita gave me some names.

EMMETT
I been to the doctors. They give me a list of stuff not to eat: Shrimp. Nuts. Chocolate. CoTynenol. I don't eat that. I like Pertussin better. It's good on ice cream.

SAM
Did you tell him about the headaches and the...

EMMETT
Those doctors won't admit there's a problem.

SAM
Can't they add two and two?

EMMETT
That's not the way science works, Sam. These scientists got a career to think about - they got to work
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

EMMETT
ten years in a laboratory and kill nine million rats. Then they might draw a conclusion. But you take anything obvious, like a cat purring when they're happy. They don't believe that's why -- 'Happy? Where's your proof that cat's happy? How many rats did you kill?'

SAM
Will you go to these doctors?

EMMETT
I'll go if you shut up about it, when they just laugh at me.

SAM
Boy, are you difficult.

EMMETT
I know.

He has never looked up from the game.

CUT TO:

EXT TOM'S KUSTOM KOLLISSION - DAY

It is the backyard and garage of an old run down house; what once was lawn is jammed with old wrecks, rusting parts, motorcycles in various states of assembly, etc. An old VW, it's beige paint oxidized to a flat finish spotted with rust, is parked among the junkers.

CLOSE: AN OILY HAND ON A TORSION WRENCH

Muscular and shiny; the wrench gleaming and complicated looking; the hand tightens it down on a nut. SHOT WIDENS to reveal Tom, at work on one of his machines. In contrast to the disorder and dirt of the place the work he does is neat and precise; he is absorbed in it, getting the tension just right. OVER HIS SHOULDER BEHIND HIM we SEE Sam appear, watching him, until he becomes aware of her and turns, startled. He doesn't like surprises and has to suppress his irritation. We are talking about a combat veteran's instinctive reactions to surprises...

TOM
Jumping Jesus! Don't come up on a man that way.

SAM
Didn't mean to scare you. I'll start over again. Hi. I just wanted to see that bug.

Tom is okay again: he grins. He lights a cigarette as they move to look at it.

TOM
How far can you run? I seen you running.

SAM
Five, six miles. I ran ten once but I got shin splints, I went at it too sudden.

TOM
What do you want a car for if you can run that far?

SAM
Everybody wants a car, to go places.

TOM
Sure you don't want a dirt bike; lot cheaper. You can drive 'em in the dirt and fall off and it don't hurt much. I put one together and wreck it and then I just put me another one together. Don't mean nothing.

Sam has been inspecting the VW while he chattered.

SAM
Everything means something.

TOM
Are you always so serious?

SAM
Don't you ever feel like the whole world is falling in pieces, and everybody is just payin attention to their little piece, so nobody is doing anything about what's really wrong. It scares me.

TOM
I get feelin like that I get on my dirt bike and just drive like hell till I fall off or feel better.

SAM
You think about your friends who died in Viet Nam?

TOM
Sam, it's better to forget all that. Emmett is like everybody else, he's got it twisted around in his mind, what it was about, so he can live with it and not have to think about it.

SAM
Not Pete. He loved it.

TOM
Yeah, well, Pete. Pete had the time of his life over there. When I get on that bike it's because I feel dead, not because I'm scared or crazy or something. I go down to Cawood's and bump along through the trees and let the memories come. It's like being back with them...the ones that died. It's kind of pleasant. What the hell am I telling you this for, when I just told you to quit asking?

SAM
Thank you.

This is so simple and easy and heart felt, Tom stares at her for a moment. All she means by it is that for the first time someone has really told her about their time in that past we all share. He is like a man emerging from a spell. He grins. Sexual tension.

TOM
Aw, hell. You want a test ride in that bug?

CUT TO:

EXT MAIN STREET HOPEWELL - DAY

The VW roars and clatters, drawing stares from everyone. It needs a muffler, too, as it backfires. The transmission has only low/low and high/high so Tom has to accelerate like a madman in lowest, making it whine with effort to get it to a speed where he can shift into high/high, at which it is going fast but bucks like a bronc. Tom and Sam are having fun. WE SEE THIS FROM TOWNSPEOPLE'S POINT OF VIEW as the car whips through town... (The style I have in mind is like the montage of citizens-in-the-street reactions to the Beatles and younger generation in "A Hard Day's Night.")

PEOPLE IN THE DRUGSTORE: STARE OUT THE WINDOW: THE BUG PASSES THROUGH IN REFLECTION

ON SIDEWALK: THE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES, PASSING OUT LITERATURE PAUSE TO WATCH THE BUG ZING PAST

EMMETT LOOKS OVER THE PARAPET OF HIS EXCAVATION AS WE HEAR THE BUG THUNDER BY

ANITA (IN CIVVIES, A PINK KNIT DRESS, MATCHING PUMPS, SILVER NECKLACES CASCADING OVER THAT MAGNIFICENT CHEST) TURNS AND WATCHES. THE BUG MAKES A U-TURN AND PASSES HER TWICE.

LONNIE'S VAN LUMBERS ALONG; THE BUG PASSES HIM AS THOUGH HE WERE STANDING STILL. HOLD ON THE VAN. The bug leaves the SHOT and its sound grows small in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT VAN - DAY (MOVING SHOT)

It is another day; Lonnie is driving, Emmett is in the passenger seat; Sam leans from behind between the two seats. They are on a country road.

EMMETT
I figured out Pac Man, Lonnie. Trick is you ignore the little vitamin pills. They're just there to distract you, and make you think you can get something for nothing. But you keep your mind on business, you can keep going forever. That's the zen of Pac Man.

LONNIE
You're way out in front of me, Emmett. I'll have to try that.

He is turning into a neat low building that is a new medical clinic, a neat place set out in open country. As they turn into a parking space...

SAM
Look at this place! It wasn't here last week. It looks like a franchise place...

EMMETT
Here you go, Lonnie. Franchises, that's your future. Franchise medicine.

SAM
"McDoctor!"

They fall out laughing...

EMMETT
"Doc-In-A-Box!"

LONNIE
Come on, I'm tryin to park, y'all.

CUT TO:

INT/EXT CLINIC - DAY

Through glass doors they are entering. Waiting room.

SAM
(to receptionist)
Emmett Smith? For Doctor Kresko?

RECEPTIONIST
Mister Smith? Right this way please, the doctor is waiting...

She is bewildered as they burst into laughter, which they muffle. She takes Emmett into an anteroom where she takes down his history, out of hearing of Lonnie and Sam, who sit down...

LONNIE
I'm going up to the Lake tomorrow with the guys. I want you to think about you and me.

SAM
I'll think about us.

LONNIE
Do me a favor. Don't go riding around with Tom Hudson.

SAM
He's got a car for sale, for crying out loud. He took me for trial ride.

LONNIE
Where you going to get the money for that car? Come on, Sam. You have to give me a token of your affection.

SAM
What for?

LONNIE
They're having a big stag party for my brother and we all have to bring some womens' underwear. Will you let me have a pair of your panties? The black ones?

SAM
That's ridiculous!

LONNIE
No, it's not. It shows you care about me. It'll make me think about you.

She looks at him, seeing him in a wholly new way - but before she can get hold of it...

EMMETT (V.O.)
Sixty-three bucks!

CUT TO:

INT VAN - DAY

We are inside the van going home; Emmett is sore.

EMMETT
And he tells me to wash my face more often. Or it could be something I eat, or something in the house. Do I use hair spray or makeup? He asked me if I had a cat. I was ahead of him there. I said no.

LONNIE
Maybe it's your skirt.

SAM
Did he give you any medication?

EMMETT
No. He said it's all in my head. He's right. The question is, how do you get it out?

The emotion that smolders behind this last sentence is more than any of them want to deal with. They ride in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - NIGHT CLOSE: MOON PIE

Moon Pie sits waiting for them; the headlights cross over him, and he moves down to greet Emmett as Emmett gets out of the van. The van kicks over unevenly...

INT VAN

Lonnie leans to start a night's kissing... Sam holds him by the ears and looks into his face. She smiles. She kisses him on the lips, holding him by the ears. He kisses back, eagerly.

After a moment she pulls him back by the ears, and still holding him, looks at him very closely, as though seeing him for the first time.

He is puzzled. She begins to gently laugh.

She is suddenly infinitely older than Lonnie - she has outgrown him. She is in control, and he doesn't even know it.

But he knows something is happening even if he doesn't know what.

LONNIE
What?

Sam just laughs, then kisses him lightly to reassure him.

SAM
You can wear my panties for a hat.

She jumps down and runs into the house...

CUT TO:

EXT BURGER KING - DAY

Sam is running. Dawn steps out in the uniform; brown and yellow are not her colors. She is taking a cigarette break; Sam runs over and stops to talk, doing limbering exercises as they do so...

DAWN
What are you listening to?

Sam turns one of her earphones so it faces out: Dawn leans over and puts her ear to it, so their heads are right together; they lean together listening to music we can't hear, and BEGIN TO DANCE to the beat, grinning like idiots.

Two boys in a Trans-Am honk them and cheer...

SAM
That's what gets me; you can't do anything alone in this town without everybody chiming in.

SAM
Did you get another test kit?

DAWN
Guess what? Kenny is getting an apartment over the furniture store; he's talking about getting married, and I didn't even tell him, yet.

Sam takes back the earphone so she can communicate seriously...

SAM
Did you do another test?

DAWN
I bought one, but I thought, why bother? Either I am or I am not, and what am I going to do if I am?

SAM
So you're going to just let it happen to you?

A passing Dodge Dart honks: the driver (a boy) leans out...

BOY DRIVER
Hey, Dawn, I saw Ken at Bob's Car Wash. He said he has to work late, and can't pick you up.

He accelerates away.

DAWN
Oh, shit! How am I going to get home?

SAM
I'm glad for you, Dawn. You're lucky you and Ken feel that way about each other.

DAWN
You okay with Lonnie?

SAM
Lonnie. He just wants to buy a six pac and drive a truck in a ditch.
(beat)
It'd break his heart if I went with someone else.

CUT TO:

(SAM'S DREAM)

INT AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A rock concert; The Boss whips up frenzy, his face suffused with that innocent smile mixed with slight amazement at what's happening mixed with a devilish glee in the fact he is doing it; the audience are all his.

We SEE him from Sam's point of view, from the sixth row, but he seems to be singing right through the waving arms of the first rows to her, alone, incitingly. Girls reach up, trying to be pulled on stage, but he only looks at Sam.

Heads turn to look at her. The fans begin to reach out, touching, grabbing her, lifting her up, so she is supported above the heads of crowd on their hands; they pass her forward, over their heads, delivering her to Bruce.

As she reaches the stage, they push her upright into his arms, and she dances with Bruce to the thunder of the crowd.

CLOSE: SAM

Waking up to the fury of another storm. Lightning and thunder segue out of the noise and light of the concert. The lights are out in the house. She sees a flashlight beam. She gets up...

INT BASEMENT - NIGHT

Emmett stands in the basement flashing the light around. The floor is inches deep in water; Emmett has his finger in a crack, exploring. Muddy water runs down his arm and over his clothes. He looks round at Sam as she comes down the stairs, wrinkling her nose at the smell.

EMMETT
God damn, I thought I about had it fixed.

He sits down on the cellar stairs, tired and discouraged: his head hurts.

SAM
Everything in this house has been fixed at least five times.

EMMETT
You have to work at holdin things together.

Sam speaks gently, with a real friendly curiosity, almost wonder in her voice...

SAM
You could just walk away from it, Emmett. You could go anywhere, Flagstaff, Australia, Japan, what's keeping you here? It's not like you worked for a living. Do something beside watch TV.

EMMETT
Stop bugging me, Sam. I'll go to that dance. That's what's buggin you isn't it? But that's all I can manage right now.

SAM
Hey! All right! But you have to promise you'll dance with Anita.

EMMETT
I can't dance.

SAM
You dance with Anita. I remember you. When you're with Anita you can dance.

CUT TO:

INT HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

MUSIC OVER: "All You Need Is Love." The naive lyric and simple tune play against:

MEANDERING PANNING SHOT: PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE MEN - AS BOYS - IN VIETNAM. HERE ARE TOM, EMMETT, PETE AND THE OTHERS WE WILL MEET, AND MANY MORE. GRINNING SOLDIERS IN FATIGUES, TRYING TO LOOK TOUGH, POSED AGAINST OIL DRUMS, A HOOCH, A JEEP, NONDESCRIPT PALMS, IN ONE A SPOTTED DOG. AT THE MOST ONE OR TWO SHOW ANY VIETNAMESE, AND THEN THEY ARE CHILDREN.

SOME HAVE DOG TAGS HANGING BESIDE THEM, AND A SMALL BOW TIED IN BLACK RIBBON: THE DEAD. DWAYNE IS ONE OF THEM...

CLOSE: SAM

This was from her point of view: she and Jim Holly have been sticking Dwayne's picture in the collage. She is staring at the picture, dry eyed. She is wearing tight jeans, a studded belt, tank top, and two pairs of earrings. Emmett is with her...

JIM HOLLY
Your Daddy was a good boy, not wild; him and your Mom made a good lookin couple.

SAM
I don't know anything about him...

JIM HOLLY
Well, he was the quiet type. This music takes you back, I don't know if it's a good thing. I used to like "White Rabbit."

Sam starts to move, and Jim moves with her, letting us see the room, decorated with paper and cardboard palms; the bar is a trestle table framed by cardboard and paper hooch, with an attempt at a thatch roof. Under a hoop of the basketball court stands a huge cardboard tank, flanked by displays of Viet Nam era war paraphernalia: a helmet, a poncho, an M--16 or model of one. The tank shelters the music system between its treads. There are 40 or 50 people here, dancing and sitting and standing and drinking, but they seem like a small turnout in the gymnasium.

MOVING TWOSHOT: SAM AND JIM HOLLY

SAM
Grace Slick? With that kind of music why didn't the VC just lay down their guns and get stoned? You should of just turned up the volume and blasted rock and roll into the jungle.

JIM HOLLY
Yeah. You got a real good imagination, Sam.

SAM
(singing along)
"All you need is love..." You know how dumb that song is? Love doesn't solve anything, even between two people, it makes the problems.

JIM HOLLY
Well, you're too deep for me, there, Sam.

We realize Sam is riding a manic energy tonight; she's enjoying teasing Jim, who isn't dumb, just like most shy country people a little scared of a new idea.

Here's Pete and his wife CINDY...she's tough, with a clenched jaw, like a lady truck driver.

PETE
Hey, Jim, Sam, you know my wife, Cindy, Sam, Emmett's keeper.

CINDY
(admiringly)
I wouldn't have the nerve to wear all those earrings. How do you do it?

This emboldens Sam, who is already overbold with adrenalin.

SAM
I wouldn't have the nerve to chase somebody with a shotgun.

CINDY
You heard about that? Oh, hell, it's a shame, some people you just got to be real dramatic just to get their attention.

She shoulders Pete, laughing, so everyone will know it's a joke. Sam is relieved to be off the hook.

CINDY
I got to take this cheese log over to the food table. I'll get us some beers, honey.

She goes. Jim has turned away to talk to someone else. Pete leans over Sam and cups his hand around her ass...

PETE
Don't tell her I showed you my tattoo.

Sam twists away from the hand...

SAM
Why, what'll she do to me?

PETE
That ain't the question; it's what she'll do to me.

Pete ambles away after Cindy, to where wives are putting out food. Sam turns and sees Emmett.

Emmett is standing with Earl, who is already a little drunk...

EMMETT
Looks better than ham and mother-fuckers don't it, Earl?

EARL
I'll never eat them again, I can't go near ham nor beans - of any kind.

Sam enters...listening...

EARL
Sue Ann isn't comin because she's started the Jesus diet, and she figured there'd be about a ton of pies and cake, and all the stuff she loves.

SAM
What's the Jesus diet?

EARL
(dead serious)
Sue Ann took a pledge to Jesus to lay off the calories. You can cheat on yourself, she says, but you can't cheat on Jesus... but she didn't want to test her faith tonight.

EMMETT
(referring to weapons)
These things look like antiques.

SAM
Maybe that's what they'd ought to be. Maybe they could make a nuclear bomb into a couch.

They look at her strangely. She's used to it.

EARL
What's her trouble Emmett? She one of them peaceniks?

EMMETT
Oh, Jesus, Earl.

Emmett hears Earl starting his head tape, and they all know once it starts, it won't stop till it gets to the end.

EARL
On TV, they made us all out to be psychos and killers. But most of us have adjusted just fine. I haven't had any problems. I've got a good job.

EMMETT
That's fine, Earl. We're proud of you.

EARL
I got my memories, but I've learned responsibilities. I come to terms with what I did.

SAM
I want to get Emmett to go to the war memorial. Did you go to the war memorial?

EARL
That Goddam hole in the ground. No I did not. See that's like livin in the past. I ain't thinkin about the past; I'm livin in the future. Kids. You have to make sure you don't get sucked into a war they can't win, like we did...

PETE
Correction. A war they wouldn't let us win? We could have...

EARL
See? See? That is what I mean! You still want to win the mother. That's livin in the past. This is sickening, all this --
(kicks at the 'tank')
Balloons. Toys. Why have all this? This is stupid.

PETE
Hey! I drove a tank like this, and I'm proud of it. Lay off it.

EMMETT
He's just buggin you, Pete. Don't let him get you that way.

EARL
Question is what are you doin <u>now</u>? I didn't have trouble comin back because you know why? I didn't whine! I did my job In-country and I'd do it again. You self-pitying people make me sick.

EMMETT
Earl you got to watch it now, or Pete's gonna flatten you.

Sam is fascinated by these men and their half hidden antagonisms. Her look goes from man to man like a tennis watcher. Then:

ANITA (V.O.)
Emmett Smith? How the hell are you?

And everyone stops to look at her: she wears tight jeans, high heels, and a bright red top with string straps, filled with her imperious breasts. She hugs Emmett.

ANITA
Hey, you all!

EMMETT
(grinning)
You look like a Kentucky Redbird.

ANITA
I <u>am</u>, I'm flying tonight! Sam! You look darling. I love your earrings!

Earl turns to refill his beer; the moment of tension is broken.

ANITA
Emmett, you gonna grow roots where you are, or you want to dance?

And to a country-dancing tune she sweeps him off, dancing the way black kids dance, easy and free and unself conscious. Emmett moves at first with self conscious jerks, looking at her with the far off look he gets, as though he were looking to the edge of the universe, or so far inside himself, he's lost. But with her he begins to smooth out...

When Emmett is with Anita, he can dance.

MOVING SHOT WITH SAM

As she walks around the edge of the dance floor parallel to them, to watch, moving in Anita's rhythm. Happy. The party seems to have picked up festive momentum with Anita's arrival.

Sam walks right into Tom without seeing him.

TOM
Well, then.

She stands, not knowing what to do. Tom regards her a long moment, then dances her onto the floor. He holds her at a discreet distance.

DANCING TWOSHOT: TOM AND SAM

As they dance. We SEE Emmett and Anita, whom Sam watches when she thinks to, talking and having a good time. Other action, in b.g., a small group around Earl, who is yelling and talking and gesticulating; and others are moving and moving out arguing with him. A fight in the making, though we HEAR nothing of it over the music....

TOM
Where's your boyfriend?

SAM
What boyfriend?

Tom looks at her a moment and then nods.

He pulls her closer and dances her out of the SHOT.

HOLD ON A FULLSHOT OF THE SCENE. The dancers and the argument by the bar; a few people leaning over and looking at the photographs.

CUT TO:

INT LADY'S ROOM - NIGHT

This is the womens' dressing room of a high school gymnasium so it is pretty basic, but it does have a long continuous mirror over the several washbasins. OFFSTAGE some unidentifiable event is going on: a muffled man's voice on a p.a. making a speech or an announcement. Women are here taking advantage of the music stoppage to repair makeup, or just get away from the son of a bitch for minute, or pee and/or all of the above.

Cindy is doing her hair in the mirror with furious strokes...

CINDY
I can't get Pete away from Earl and Earl's just looking for a fight.

SAM
Earl looks like he's getting drunk.

CINDY
He shouldn't be drinking; he's got liver trouble. I heard Emmett had liver trouble. Is that true, Sam?

SAM
I hope not. He's got enough trouble with headaches and the rashes. I already had him checked for Agent Orange.

Sam is sorry she ever got into this conversation but there's no where to go, and one of her earrings is giving her trouble so she's stuck...

CINDY
Those earrings are cute. They remind me of what they did over there.

SAM
What?

CINDY
You're probably too young to know this, but they cut off the ears of the Viet Cong they killed to prove they did it. They kept them for souvenirs. Pete brought some home, in a glass jar, they're like little mouse ears, kind of sweet looking, I didn't think about it for years. He was proud he served his country and I was too. Then one day they got to me and I made him put them out in the garage where I wouldn't have to look at them.

She admires her refurbished hairdo and lips, not noticing the effect of all this on Sam.

CINDY
Emmett sure acts like he's having a good time with Anita.

SAM
I like her.

CINDY
She's smashed. She's been after Emmett for years, did you know that?

She exits.

CUT TO:

INT GYMNASIUM - NIGHT

ANITA

She is just turning from getting a drink from the bar. Pete and Earl are gesticulating at each other with beers that slop; we can't hear what they're saying because of the music ("House of the Rising Sun"). The dancing is looser and less coordinated. Anita is a little wobbly, a smile on her face...CAMERA PANS ROUND TO

SAM

who is watching her. Anita catches her look...

ANITA
I'm so smashed. I was so nervous over seeing Emmett I had to get tanked up.

SAM
Let me have some of that...

She takes a big swallow of Anita's drink...she is not used to hard liquor.

ANITA
God, he's so cute. He said, just now, 'I ain't got nothin but hard times and bubble gum, and I'm fresh out of bubble gum.' I like a man who makes me laugh. What are you drinkin for?

SAM
I just want to do something bad.

ANITA
There's Emmett. I hope I'm not drunk and stupid.

She heads for Emmett; Sam takes a pull on the drink. Tom grabs her from behind and dances her off...

MOVING TWOSHOT: SAM AND TOM

SAM
Did you collect ears off the dead?

TOM
No. Some guys did.

SAM
Did you have a girl back home that wrote you sexy letters?

TOM
Yeah. But she got tired of waiting for me and married a pacifist.

SAM
Did you get mad or sad? That rhymes. I'm a poet. I didn't know it. But my feet show it. They're Longfellows.

Tom is grinning at her. We realize she's getting a little drunk herself, but she doesn't know it.

TOM
Where'd you get the drink?

SAM
Is it anybody I know?

TOM
Not from around here. It was OK. She wouldn't of been able to fit in my story anyway.

SAM
What is your story?

She says it in a thrilling sort of way. Tom laughs, delighted; they are dancing in their own golden bubble.

YELLS AND CRASHES Sam sees Pete fall back into the cardboard tank, crushing it. Earl has slugged him.

TOM
Oh, Pete will never stand for that!

They rush, along with others to where Pete and Earl wrestle around, destroying the tank.

People try to save the bar table and the food.

Emmett steps in and separates the fighters. They seem to respect him, punching out at others who try to intervene, but letting him interpose himself. Tom tries to restrain Earl, who throws him away...

EARL
Just lemme alone!

He stares at them furiously, without words, breathing heavily, then stalks out into the night. Pete is grinning, though he has a little blood on his lip.

PETE
I had to defend my tank. Looks like I destroyed it in the process. Y'all familiar with that military tactic?

CINDY
It never fails that I have to be humiliated.

PETE
He was looking to get his ass and head rearranged.

CINDY
Let me get that with this kleenex...

She is cleaning up the blood. He is still grinning...

PETE
He talks about somebody with problems, even the VA would see he has problems.

CINDY
I know hon, he can't hold his beer, with his liver, he shouldn't be drinkin.

Sam is staring at them in amazement. The complexity of their relationship fascinates and repels her at the same time: she begins to laugh. She can't stop. Tom, Emmett and Anita gather around her, laughing and slapping her back.

CUT TO:

GYMNASIUM (LATER)

Fewer drunker people; people leaving. Jim sits by the beer keg, drinking. Tom and Sam and some others sit and stand around him. Jim is weeping...

JIM HOLLY
(to departing couple)
Hey, y'all take your photos home with you! I don't want that responsibility..

The couple turn to the bulletin board and take down their photo, signalling thanks for the reminder.

JIM HOLLY
People don't really care, I thought more would come. I been fooling myself, Sam. I know the public don't care about the Viet Nam vet, but I thought when you went through something like a war together, it meant something. We'd care about each other?

TOM
Can you get home, okay, Jim?

JIM HOLLY
Yeah. I'll just clean up a little and go get some coffee.

TWOSHOT: SAM AND TOM

She looks down as something touches her: CAMERA shows us, Tom has taken her hand. She looks at him. He starts to lead her away, she follows.

Near the door, she looks at the bulletin board: Dwayne's crepe decorated photo is one of the last. She runs back and takes it down, putting it into her bag. She runs after Tom

CUT TO:

EXT PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Tom's dirt bike is parked there. Sam and Tom kiss by it in the pool of hard mercury light.

TOM
What are you doing to me? I better get you home.

SAM
I don't want to go home. I don't have to, I don't have a curfew. Anyway, I think Emmett and Anita are there.

He looks at her. Understands. He swings onto the bike. She swings on behind him, flying...he starts it, and they thunder off into the night, her arms around him...

CUT TO:

MONTAGE: NIGHT BIKE RIDE (MOVING SHOTS WITH BIKE)

It flees through the night, along the narrow twisting streets and roads, in and out of the pitch black shadows, through the streaks and pools of light from lamp posts and buildings, advertising signs and passing car headlights, the two figures alone together in the night. It is very fast and not quite real...

DISSOLVING INTO:

SAM'S HANDS CARESSING HIS BARE BACK.

HIS FACE: HE'S CRYING

HIS HANDS ON HER BREASTS: GENTLE AND FIRM.

HER FACE: CALM, HAPPY, WAITING.

GENTLE LOVE MAKING...BUT:

But the rhythm is off, somehow nothing is quite right. They slow; the magic is draining away.

She reaches around and down his stomach to his crotch. She stops, feeling something below the frame.

SAM
What's wrong? Did I hurt you?

TOM
God damn it.

TOM: He abruptly curls himself up and away from her into a sitting position on the edge of the bed. He lights a cigarette. His face is devastated.

SAM: Puzzled, worried, ready to blame herself, but doesn't know what's happening yet.

SAM
What do you want me to do?

TOM
Oh, hell there ain't nothin to do. Here, I'm on fire. But there ain't nothin I can do about it. Shit, I shouldn't of brought you here...

SAM
You didn't bring me here, I made you bring me! I came here myself.

TOM
Well, the hell with it. You couldn't call it corruption of a minor, anyway.
(laughs bitterly)

SAM
I don't care. Can I put my arms around you?

He avoids her embrace.

SAM
Come on. Did I do something wrong?

TOM
No, it's just in my head. My mind takes me where I don't want to go. It ain't your fault; it's just me.

SAM
Hug me.

She pulls him down into a comfortable embrace, not sexual, but close and comforting.

SAM
Just let me hold you, just stay real close.

He buries his face in her hair. She lies awake, holding him.

CUT TO:

INT TOM'S ROOM - DAWN

Sam is asleep in his bed. Tom is gone. She takes in the disordered room by daylight; she is hung over. We HEAR sounds of Tom at work outside...she starts to get up...

CUT TO:

EXT KUSTOM KOLLISSION - DAY

Tom is working on a dirt bike. Sam enters... Tom doesn't look up.

TOM
You want some eggs? There's eggs and bread in the refrigerator...

SAM
No. I guess I'll run home.

TOM
I'll drive you home...

SAM
No, thanks, I need the exercise. I think I have a hangover.

TOM
Let me know if you want that bug. I already been working on it some.

She watches him working for a moment, can't think what to say more, takes off her shoes, and begins to run...

HOLD

He works. Neither can summon the words or will to speak. At last she is gone...

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - DAY

Sam, tired, walks up to the door. She sits down on the stoop and hugs her knees. After a moment she HEARS a meow, and reaches behind her: Moon Pie comes out, and trails around her ankles, purring.

SAM
(softly)
Oh, sure, the world goes all to hell, but the cat must be fed.

INT HOUSE - DAY

Sam enters, looks around...

SAM
Emmett?

No answer. She smiles, she's glad. He's not home, he's off with Anita. She clicks on the TV. Opens a can of food for Moon Pie.

INT EMMETT'S ROOM - DAY

It is like a Freshman dormitory. Sam looks in, just checking.

INT SAM'S ROOM - DAY

She enters. Looking for something in her bag she finds the picture of Dwayne; she pulls off the black crepe and puts it back in the mirror. She lies down, pulls out the packet of letters and begins to read them again...

SOUND MONTAGE: These are a montage of lines from various letters, including the one we heard before; they overlap, jump in mood and tone, so we know we are receiving a collective impression of the whole of the correspondence, out of real time just as the images are a compression of reality, an expression of her subjective state of mind.

DWAYNE'S
VOICE
No, I haven't seen any tigers or gorillas./ It's been raining steady for three months now and everything is mud./ I can't tell you what we're doing, but every
(MORE)

DWAYNE (V.O.)
time we go out we push the enemy back a little further. I dream maybe I got a baby boy at home. / Like a dream./ I got your picture I look at sometimes so I know it's not a dream, it's you standing by the Nash Rambler. It's black and white but I know you got on the red shorts./ The world's a dream now I'm here, and maybe when I'm home this will be a dream...

EXT HOPEWELL STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

The same very long lens shot of Sam running we used in the titles, with the birds filling the scene. She runs, straining and faster and faster...

DWAYNE (V.O.)
...Bill and Bob are too ordinary. My favorite name is Samuel. It's from the Bible. I wish you didn't have to go through this by yourself. Don't ask me to tell you how it is here. You don't want to know...I guess if it's a girl you could call it Samantha.

EXT HOPEWELL TOWN SQUARE - DAY

SAM, RUNNING (REAL TIME AND PLACE)

She sees Anita, standing by her car in a gas station; a mechanic is checking something out. Sam stops, surprised and disappointed.

ANITA
Well, Hi! You have a good time? What'd you do after?

SAM
I thought Emmett was with you...

Anita moves closer to her so the mechanic can't hear...

ANITA
No, we just drove around... I swear I just laughed and laughed. Why, isn't he home?

SAM
Well, he's like Moon Pie, sometimes he takes off on little trips.

ANITA
He'll be back.

SAM
Why, were you gonna get together?

Anita laughs

ANITA
Well, if you and me can make up his mind! You call me, now!

She is called back to the business at the car. Sam looks at her, digesting this news, then starts to run.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

Sam on phone. It is answered...

LARRY (O.S.)
This is Larry and Irene, business is good, life is great, and we look forward to your terrific message at the beep...
(beep)

She hangs up. Dials.

DAWN (O.S.)
Hello?

SAM
Any news?

DAWN (O.S.)
Oh, God. I did it. It's positive again. What am I going to do? My stomach feels weird all the time. Like all the blood's rushing to it.

SAM
Wait and see what the doctor says. It's still so early. It's even too early to get an abortion.

DAWN (O.S.)
I'll pretend I didn't hear that word. I haven't said a word to Ken.

SAM
When are you seeing him?

DAWN (O.S.)
I hate this. If I tell him, he's going to think I planned it this way. I hate it when guys always think you're scheming something. My father's coming in, God, I've got to clean up in the kitchen before he sees it,bye,thanksfor-calling,talktoyoulater.

Sam lies back, staring at the ceiling. She clicks on the TV. MTV sound fills the room. She zaps the stations.

INT SAM'S ROOM - DAY

She is waking up. Church bells.

EXT HOUSE - DAY

Sam emerges. Mrs Biggs is coming out of her house, ready for church.

SAM
Have you seen Emmett, Mrs Biggs?

MRS BIGGS
Not since he mowed under the forsythia for me. Why, is he gone?

SAM
I'm just looking for him.

MRS BIGGS
You're going to be late for church.

SAM
I'm not going, Mrs Biggs.

MRS BIGGS
You ought to be there, Sam. The way it's getting to be there ain't nobody but old people in the church anymore.

Sam is seriously worried now. She adjusts her Walkman and begins to run with more than the usual energy...

CLOSE: SAM (RUNNING)

Alone with the music, which we should HEAR. Mellenkamp, "Dick and Jane." Or Bob Seger "Against the Wind." Gradually she becomes aware of a voice in her ear...

LONNIE (O.S.)
Where were you?

He is cruising alongside her, leaning out of the window...

SAM
What are you doing back?

LONNIE
Get in.

She opens the door and gets in without him needing to stop...

INT VAN - DAY (MOVING SHOT)

LONNIE
Turned out Johnny's girl friend's family was having a party for them, so we had to cut the weekend short. We had a real high time though. What I remember of it. Your panties was a real hit.

SAM
(sarcastic)
Oh, great! Did you take pictures?

LONNIE
My camera broke down, it gave me a whole idea about what to do with my life. Camera repair. You realize I can't even get that sucker fixed in Paducah, I got to drive clear to Memphis? You walk in anybody's house in Hopewell and there's a camera. They break, they wear out, there's a need.

SAM
Where do you learn to repair cameras?

LONNIE
Correspondence school. They give you a camera to work on. I set my own hours, work at home.

Lonnie has noticed her unresponsiveness... he's pulling off down a lane, sheltered by trees, and stops...

LONNIE
Come on, Sam. What's goin on in that head of yours?

SAM
Hard to describe. You sort of have to be there.

She fends off Lonnie's attempt to embrace her: he is clearly sexually aroused, and she is clearly not in the mood.

SAM
I'm put out with Emmett. Now he's turned up missing. Two whole days. I'm tired of taking care of him. Truth is I'm tired of everybody's trouble. Here.

She has twisted his ring off her finger and hands it to him.

LONNIE
What's this?

SAM
Your friendship ring.

LONNIE
I know that! What does it mean?

SAM
I don't know. It means I'm confused. And I don't want to go to that wedding.

LONNIE
I can't believe you're serious.

SAM
You believe whatever you want to believe, no matter what I tell you. So what's the use?

LONNIE
Is it that old guy, Tom?

SAM
Poor Lonnie. You don't know anything.

LONNIE
If you're wondering why I'm not throwing a fit over this, it's because I don't really believe you mean it. You're just acting crazy.

She says anything that he'll accept, and leave her alone...

SAM
All right. It's Dawn. She's pregnant.

Lonnie smiles.

LONNIE
Hey! I knew she'd marry Ken somehow.

SAM
Now she'll live and die in Hopewell.

Lonnie thinks for bit, then nods assent to some thought in his head...

LONNIE
You know what I'm going to do with this ring? I'm going to throw it in the lake. I don't want any other girl wearin it. You want me to take you home or are you still training for the Olympics?

SAM
You can take me home if you don't hate me. I don't hate you.

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE - CLOSE: MOON PIE

The usual mess. No sign of Emmett. The VAN CAN BE HEARD DRIVING UP, O.S..

Moon Pie gets up, yawns, stretches and goes to the door to look out...

HOLD ON MOON PIE

He watches as Lonnie's van (unmistakable sound) drives up...

LONNIE (O.S.)
(yelling)
Well, you can forget about them panties. You're not gettin 'em back!

SAM (O.S.)
(yelling back)
Oh, for God's sake! You're like a child!

But her voice was mostly lost in the roar of the van peeling out. The door opens and she steps in, to greet Moon Pie. The anger has yielded to sadness...

SAM
Hi, Moon Pie. Emmett?
(no answer - to Moon Pie)
You want some food? Dumb question.

Moon Pie however has run outside... she follows...

EXT HOUSE - DAY

The cat goes along the trench, and into a hole in the concrete, where a piece of plywood has fallen away...part of Emmett's earthworks...

SAM
Where is he? He's your human. You should look out for him. You should take him for walks on a leash. Where is he? Is he digging under the kitchen?
(as the cat goes under the house)
Oh, shit! He didn't have a heart attack and die down there, did he?

She leans into the hole, trying to see...

SAM
Emmett? Emmett?

She scrambles to her feet and heads for the house...

INT UNDER HOUSE

Sam crawls, with a flashlight, under the joists and plumbing looking for Emmett's body...she is almost crying with anxiety.

We HEAR a car turn into the yard, and a horn blares. She turns and looks toward the hole, where we can see the wheels of a car. And a woman's neat legs stepping down from it. Wearing high heeled sandals.

IRENE (O.S.)
Surprise! Sam?

SAM
Oh, God, Mom!?

Irene, leans down and peers in the hole at Sam, f.g. White scoop necked T-shirt, pink shorts, lavender-rimmed sun glasses.

IRENE
Sam? What are you doing?

SAM
Looking for Emmett.

IRENE
Honey, I've got him in the car with me. Come on out of there, I just want to look at you.

Sam heaves a sigh of relief and begins to crawl out...

EXT HOUSE - DAY

Angle on Emmett in the car; head on a pillow, shirttail out, top of his jeans unfastened. He's still wearing what he wore to the dance. In the back is Irene's tiny baby smacking her lips in a dream. Irene leans in to pick up the baby, as Sam examines both her passengers...

IRENE
He showed up at my place in the middle of the night, so drunk he was about to pass out.

SAM
Why didn't you call me? You must of known I'd be worried.

Emmett mumbles and shadow boxes the air...

IRENE
I've had to put up with this ever since we left Lexington.

SAM
And I've been looking for him like a dork.

They carry the baby toward the house...

IRENE
A guy in a pickup left him off. Larry was asleep and I was watching "Invasion of the Bodysnatchers," did you see that? The new one, not the old one. It was real strange. I never got to see how it turned out.

INT HOUSE - DAY

As they enter...

SAM
They all get snatched.

IRENE
It seemed like it was headed that way, but it didn't seem right.

During the following, Irene sets about fixing some food for the baby, and changing it, etc., with stuff she gets out of a big nylon tote bag; Irene is always efficiently on the move, and talks a blue streak.

IRENE
Look at this house, it's a dump. I should sell it. I'd be happy if I never saw it again.

SAM
Don't you want to see me?

IRENE
Not if you're going to leave hurtful messages on my answering machine. Did you read those letters?

SAM
Some of them.

IRENE
What did they say? I forget.

Sam stops whatever she's doing and stares at her mother.

IRENE
Sam. I was married to him for a month before he left, and I never saw him again. I hardly even remember him.

SAM
If I ever loved somebody I'd cherish everything about them, forever.

IRENE
(pause)
Well, life goes on. Mamaw's got some diaries of his, if you want them. I didn't have the heart to read that diary, if you want the truth, it hurt too much. And now it doesn't matter. The way it does to you.
(to baby)
That baby is hungry - yes!

SAM
Can you tell me how he died?

IRENE
Oh, they don't tell you that, Sam! They just say 'in the line of duty,' or somesuch. They don't want you to really know. I want you to come up and go to college with me. You got to register by next month or you lose your chance.

SAM
What's Lorenzo up to?

IRENE
Do you have to call him Lorenzo? Larry is off visiting his brother, he promised he'd help fix the roof. I don't see what keeps you here. You still seeing that basketball boy?

SAM
Lonnie's just a jock.

Emmett appears in the door, dishevelled. It's gotten darker and a light rain has begun to fall; he shakes off the drops on his head and shoulders.

EMMETT
Y'all are telling stories on me.

SAM
You goin to explain yourself, Emmett? Anita and me were both worried.

IRENE
Anita Stevens? Is she on the loose again?

EMMETT
Well, sir. I believe my body was entered into by aliens and I was transported.

IRENE
(happy)
Stinky baby!

EMMETT
I was materialized on Irene's doorstep right at the climax of her movie. She rescued me, so it wasn't such an unhappy ending.

IRENE
Sam, are you sure all the bodies got snatched in that show? Usually they think of a way out.

SAM
Nobody got saved. Emmett, I wish you'd tell a straight story.

EMMETT
Nothin to tell. Anita and me met up with Pete and Cindy at MacDonalds, and messed around. And later I run into Earl, and he was drivin up to the lake, so I decided
(MORE)

EMMETT
to go with him. I said what the hell. We had a six-pac and a piece of a bottle of Jim Beam. I din't know he was planning on stayin a week. So he dumped me off.

They stare at him. He shrugs guiltily.

EMMETT
(continuing, like Woody Woodpecker)
D-d-d-d-d-d-d-at's all, folks! Where's Moon Pie?

SAM
He went out lookin for you.

He wanders off to look for Moon Pie. The baby bicycles and whirrs its lips.

IRENE
(delighted)
Well, who pulled your string?

SAM
Let me make up your bed. You don't want to drive back the same day.

IRENE
If I'd known the whole story I would have put him on the bus. Sixteen hours and a stop at every pig path.

CUT TO:

INT IRENE'S OLD ROOM - LATER

Everything is strewn about as it was after Sam and Dawn searched for the dress...during this Sam and Irene efficiently set about making up the bed, hanging the clothes back up, etc.

IRENE
Look at this place; Sam I wish y'all'd clear this all out and have a yard sale.

SAM
What did you do with the flag on his casket?

The association is to the sheets and blankets on the bed; it takes a second for Irene to understand what Sam's talking about.

IRENE
Oh, God! Emmett made a cape out of it. That was when Emmett's crazy friends were here. I was so mad at him.

SAM
That friend of Emmett's you went to Lexington with? Did you love him?

IRENE
I thought I cared for him at that time.

SAM
What happened to him?

IRENE
He got married and they named their kid Nuclear Ragtime. Can you imagine what that kid's life is like?

SAM
Why didn't you stay in Lexington?

IRENE
We found out the market for macrame' hanging clay pots was limited. And everybody was mad at me, like they thought I should stay an old maid forever in memory of Dwayne. And Emmett was pitching fits.

SAM
Grampaw went to war, he didn't get all twisted out of shape.

IRENE
World War II was different.

SAM
The Japanese used to be little, like the Viet Namese, but they're not so little anymore since they started eating Big Macs. You think Americans will get smaller from eating sushi?

IRENE
Gahd, Sam, where do you dream these things up?

The bed is made. Irene lies back on it with Heather. She begins to nurse her during the following.

IRENE
Listen, Sam? Larry knows a guy in Lexington, who's got a good job in public relations. He was in Viet Nam and he killed a whole family of people in a hut. A mother, father, three children, some uncles and aunts and a grandmother. He killed every one of them, and he said it took two years for it to hit him what he did. But he finally got it worked out in his head that all he could do was he had try to live his life in the most productive way. He's married, he's got kids and he joined the church and he tithes. So, if he can do it, why can't Emmett?

SAM
Did Daddy kill like that?

IRENE
I don't know, but it wouldn't be unusual if he did. That's what they were sent there to do. Sam. Come here.

Sam lies down beside her mother, close to the nursing infant. Irene holds Sam close to her.

IRENE
Don't let them load you up. I had a lot of years with Emmett to think about this. You don't owe anybody anything just because they love you.

She is embracing her almost grown daughter, while she nurses her infant daughter. The three generations in one affirmative embrace. Sam is watching her mother nurse the baby. After a moment she gets up and...

SAM
Good night, Mom. Let me open your window...

EXT CLOSE SHOT MOON PIE - NIGHT

Beaded with the light rain, visible in the moonlight breaking through the rainclouds, he lurks under bushes, sees and hears the window opening.

SAM (O.S.)
Moon Pie! Get on in here.

Moon Pie streaks for the house...

INT IRENE'S ROOM: ON SAM

Behind her Irene and the baby are already almost asleep. Downstairs we can HEAR Emmett playing Pac-Man. Sam sees Moon Pie racing inside... She smiles.

SAM
Now we're all home...

CUT TO:

EXT KUSTOM KOLLISSION - DAY

Tom is at work, jeans riding low, black Budweiser T-shirt. He is repairing or restoring an elegant rifle. Nearby, the VW has had its rust spots filled in, and painted with primer. Irene's red Trans-Am comes in at high speed and parks, Irene at the wheel. Sam and baby in passenger seat. Top down, radio blaring.

SAM
This is my Mom. Tom. Is my car ready?

TOM
Hi, Irene.

IRENE
Is that it? Is it okay to drive?

TOM
I overhauled the transmission myself. I'll guarantee it. She don't have to buy it if she don't want to.

IRENE
I didn't mean to infer anything. It's just not what I expected.

SAM
Mom, it's exactly what I want. Thank you.

TOM
Let me get the papers; I got 'em all made out. You sign 'em is all...

He goes to get papers..

IRENE
Did you go out with him?

Bullseye.

SAM
Gah, Mom, what a question.

IRENE
I hope it's just a passing fancy; he's too old, and too full of trouble.

SAM
How can you see that?

IRENE
I just do. God, I'm going to be late, Larry is going to throw a shit fit. You don't have to live with me to go to college, Sam. I mean you don't have to move because I bought the car. Just come up see me.

Tom has come back with papers. Sam kisses Irene, and gets out of the car.

IRENE
(continued, to Tom, cool)
Nice to meet you, Tom. Be careful now, hear?

She peels out. Tom waves a small goodby, looking after her.

Sam and Tom are both full of the knowledge that Irene has sensed their secret.

TOM
She's sharp.

SAM
I wish she'd met you instead of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

TOM
Then I'd be your step-father. I'd take you over my knee.

SAM
You want to go riding with me?

TOM
Your boyfriend might see us.

SAM
I got rid of him.

TOM
Listen, Sam...

SAM
Why are you giving me such a hard time? I had a good time the other night. Why don't you come over to my house? You could play Pac-Man on Emmett's Atari. I think you just need to get used to me.

TOM
Will you get out of here? You know what you do to me when you're like this? I ain't numb, I want you so God damn bad it hurts, and there's nothin I can do about it, you understand that? Find somebody your own age. Go off in your new car and enjoy your life.

SAM
I could get into dirt bikes.

TOM
Jesus Christ, do I have kick your ass to tell you to get away from me and stay away?

Sam is behind the wheel. The tears begin to stream down her cheeks. She is blubbering and hates herself for doing it in front of him. She drives out of the yard, fast, bucking the car in her impatience.

CLOSE: TOM

Tom watches her go. Miserable, angry with her, with himself...he returns to the rifle he is repairing, sighting it on some of his junk...

CUT TO:

INT BURGER KING - DAY

Dawn is coming off work, shoving things into her purse, checking her hair...through the windows we SEE Sam wheel up in the VW and begin honking. Dawn looks up, smiles, and runs for the door ad libbing goodbyes to the others...

INT VW (MOVING SHOT) - DAY

Dawn jumps into the VW. Sam guns it out of the lot...

DAWN
God, this is exciting!

SAM
Yeah.

Dawn looks at her, sensing something wrong.

DAWN
What's the matter?

SAM
I don't want to talk about it. You know I told you about Tom? Don't say anything to anybody about it.

DAWN
Who would I tell? What was wrong with him anyway? Did he say?

SAM
It's the same, they all went over there, and they got their lives all screwed up and then they come home and make everybody miserable.

DAWN
Well, I'm sorry, Sam. I'm even sorry I've got good news when you're so down.

SAM
You got your period!

DAWN
No, I finally got up my courage and told Ken about the baby. He was real shocked, but then he lit up with a big grin. I think he likes the idea.

SAM
Well he doesn't have to have it. He doesn't have to take care of it.

DAWN
No he says he's the modern type, he'll share the work...

SAM
Yeah, how does he feel about him doing the breast feeding? Look, you're always wanting to do something wild. Get an abortion, for your own good.

DAWN
I want to pretend I didn't hear you say that.

SAM
You didn't plan it, you didn't <u>want</u> this baby. What are you going to <u>tell</u> it when it grows up: it was an accident? What kind of a way to be born is that? Babies should be because somebody loved them and wanted them...

DAWN
I couldn't do that. No. I think about my mother and what she went through to have me -- they were real poor, and she already had enough kids. She could have decided not have me, and she should have for her own sake, I guess. But she didn't, for my sake. That's what I'm thinking about.

Sam, for once, can think of nothing to say.

DAWN
Can't you be happy for me, Sam?

They are at a stoplight. Sam hugs her, sorry, confused...

SAM
Yeah. Oh God, I'm sorry. Always talking about myself. Dawn? You be happy!

DAWN
I worry about you, Sam. What's going to happen to you?

Sam is struck: it never occurred to her that she might be a subject of pity for Dawn or anyone else. The light changes. She is staring ahead...she is honked from behind.

CUT TO:

EXT HUGHES' FARM - DAY

It is at the end of a tree-lined gravel lane; in the turnaround in front are a green Cutlass, a battered black pickup, a blue pickup, and a Pontiac. An old dog roars in a pen; chickens scatter as Sam in her bug comes too fast into the yard. It is an old house with a porch, gently sagging with age, neat, but needing paint. The fields are well-tended, but the flowers around the house are insect eaten; the porch is full of muddy boots, buckets, tools, seeds, and canning jars; a towel is put down to soak up leakage from the refrigerator; it has the look of a place a little beyond the strength of hard working people to keep up. Inside, the old furniture is polished, the aquarium is clean, but it is cluttered with too much, and nothing matches in age or style.

Donna, Sam's aunt, (we saw her at the graduation), carrying

her baby in a blue romper suit, steps out on the porch and shades her eyes to look...

DONNA
Momma! It's little Sam?

As Sam gets out of the bug, Mamaw appears behind the screen door.

DONNA
She's nothin but a beanpole.

MAMAW
Come on in, child. I made damson pie.

SAM
I just decided to show off my new wheels. Mom bought it so I can go up and visit.

DONNA
You mean you're still livin with your crazy uncle?

INT HUGHES' HOUSE - DAY

As they enter. Grampaw sits uncomfortably with a pillow behind him...

SAM
Emmett's not crazy - you don't know him! Donna. Aunt Donna. Wow. Can I hold him?

She's reacting to the fact that she and Dwayne's sister are of the same generation but world's apart. Donna hands the baby over; Sam holds him like dancing with an unknown and dangerous future...

MAMAW
(referring to Sam)
Leave the child be, Donna, she allus was touchous.

SAM
Mom said the war messed Emmett's head up.

GRAMPAW
I'll mess his butt up!

MAMAW
(referring to Grampaw)
He's been down in his back.

SAM
The war nearly killed Emmett! He can't sleep, he can't really work.

GRAMPAW
It ain't too late to pull himself up and be proud.

During the following they are busily getting the country dishes (and there's a lot) onto the table in close quarters, while Grampaw, with his bad back, gets himself to the table ready to eat.

MAMAW
Joe, tell Sam about Dwayne. She's here wantin to know more about her Daddy.

GRAMPAW
I remember when Dwayne first brought Irene out here; she was a skinny little squirt like you.

DONNA
That was just after I was born.

MAMAW
I used to get so tickled at her. She come out once and she had a kite with her, and if she didn't go out in her high heels in the meadow and fly that kite I'm not here.

SAM
Did he love her?

There is only the slightest hesitation, not because of doubt, but because of a reticence in country people to speak of love...

GRAMPAW
They was young, and when you're young you don't know what you really feel, but I saw how she felt when the news come.

MAMAW
You was on the way, Sam. She was big as a barn.

Sam is trying to get the talk back to Dwayne, but all they seem to talk about is Irene...

SAM
Was there a big funeral?

MAMAW
It was a closed casket. They told us not to open and look. That was so hard, because you're supposed to prepare the body and watch over it. It's something that brings you together. But it was like he wasn't there, because we couldn't see him. The neighbors brought food, oh they just kept on a'bringin things to eat. Lutie Cunningham brought a whole ham and a gallon of potato salad and three pies. In a way it was a relief when we got him in the ground. But that closed casket. They wrote and told what a help he was to his country.

All this while serving up; all practical and simple and no open demonstrations of emotion. Mamaw is full of the pain of remembering that. Recovers a little:

MAMAW
It was like we never got to really watch over him. I wish I could go on up to that monument in Washington and see his name there. I saw pictures of that, and I thought of it.

SAM
Well, why not?

MAMAW
Oh, I couldn't do that, at my age. Joe's been everywhere, in World War II, but I never been out of my time zone.

SAM
Mom said you had a little notebook or a diary or something, from Daddy?

MAMAW
You want that? It ain't personal, just troop movements and like that, not loving like his letters.

DONNA
I don't have the slightest memory of him, my own brother! Ain't that a shame?

GRAMPAW
Everybody always thought it was something, that Dwayne left you behind on earth, for us, like a gift.

They all sit, now, and Mamaw, Grampaw and Donna go quiet and still so suddenly Sam is caught offguard; for a moment she forgets, then, as they wait for her to be still, she bows her head perfunctorily, for Grace...

GRAMPAW
Almighty God, bless us, as we thank Thee for Thy gift, Amen.

This is as close as Grampaw is going to come to telling Sam he loves her. They all reach for food...

CUT TO:

EXT HOUSE - DAY (SUNSET)

Sam drives up in the VW. Old 45s from Irene's collection are playing loudly from inside the house, making a cacophony with Sam's car radio playing Springsteen: "Woolly Bully," by Sam the Sham; "Tutti Frutti" by Little Richard; "Maybelline" by Chuck Berry, or like so.

Emmett appears in the door with a trash bag full of Irene's stuff. He's cleaning house. Some of her stuff is already piled by the curb. He is wearing his skirt. He looks cheerful.

Sam gets out of the car, wary of this new development.

Emmett mimes words to "Yacketty-Yack!", played and sung by the Coasters, written by Lieber and Stoller, playing at the moment...

EMMETT
Take out the garbage and the trash!
Or you don't get no petty cash!
etc....
Get a job!

Sam laughs.

SAM
I went out to Mamaw's, she gave me my father's diary.

She shows it to him; he makes a pantomime of throwing it into the trash he's collected; she recovers it...

SAM
No! I'm going to read it tonight. You throwing all this stuff out?

EMMETT
I'm thinking about putting some mylar sheets inside the windows to give us some insulation this winter.

SAM
Plastic on the windows -- that's what poor folk put up.

EMMETT
I ain't proud; it works.

SAM
I'm tired of everything being so tacky.

EMMETT
You want me to put this shit back?

That seems absurd. Sam smiles and shakes her head no, but she can't talk. Headlights of a car wash across them, as a car pulls into the yard... Sam is surprised; Emmett smiles at her...

EMMETT
I made lasagna.

The car door is opening and Anita in a slinky pink dress and spike heels gets out, making an entrance, carrying wine.

ANITA
I stopped off at the bootlegger's because I didn't have time to drive down to the Bottom. What's all this?

EMMETT
Now you look like a flamingo.

ANITA
Well, thank you, Emmett - I guess. That skirt is a hoot!

EMMETT
You like it?

SAM
It's his party dress.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

As they enter...

ANITA
Sam! Somebody said your Mom was here to take you up to Lexington to college, is that right?

Emmett looks at Sam, waiting for the answer.

SAM
Going to the same school with your mother, I don't know. That's weird isn't it?

EMMETT
She gave Sam a car.

ANITA
Well, then you could commute to Murray State and live right here.

SAM
I don't know -- I like the track team at Lexington a lot better...

ANITA
Isn't it a shame about Earl and Sue Ann? Did you hear she left him and took their little girl up to Lexington? She said she was sick and tired of his ways.

Emmett holds his head.

EMMETT
Earl flies off like he did and he gets embarrassed, and then he goes and hides in the woods, like a cat, till he gets over it.

A chill on the party. The music is still going, but now seems loud and silly. Both the women look at Emmett, apprehensively.

He sits. Anita steps behind him and begins to massage his shoulders.

ANITA
You got a headache?

EMMETT
It's Sam. She's got real mean to me since she got that Bug.

ANITA
I thought you were happy about the car.

SAM
I am, and I just might take off in it for parts unknown.

Emmett leans forward, his hands to his head...

EMMETT
Hey, Sam, go or no go, but quit fucking me over.

SAM
Mom's right, Emmett. It's time you got off your ass.

EMMETT
You're right. She's right.

ANITA
Personally, I think Sue Ann is crazy about him and she'll be back.

EMMETT
Earl is an asshole. He goes off humpin the boonies, with his dog and his rifle till he kills something, then he feels better.

SAM
Women wouldn't do that. If women had something to say about it there wouldn't be any killing.

EMMETT
For Christ sake.

ANITA
Sam's right!

EMMETT
Women get power they're just like men. You want to run into Maggie Thatcher or Indira Ghandi or who was that woman Mondale nominated, in some damn jungle?

ANITA
Geraldine Ferrarro.

EMMETT
She'd wipe us all out.

Anita laughs.

ANITA
How about I open the wine and we get drunk?

CUT TO:

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

Later. Emmett is off playing Pac-Man, running up fantastic scores, the light from the screen flickering on his face. Sam and Anita are doing dishes, finishing the wine. Anita smokes a cigarette.

ANITA
I had to go and open my big mouth. Now I've upset him.

SAM
You're good for him. He's just a little shy.

Anita laughs.

ANITA
Emmett? Shy?
(she takes a pull on the cigarrette)
Go, Sam. Don't wait around here. Whatever it is you want out of life, go get it before it's too late, because believe me it gets late real fast and sudden.

She's talking about her own regrets of course...Sam looks at her sharply; it's a tone she hasn't heard in Anita.

Emmett appears. He smiles at Anita.

EMMETT
You want to beat me at "Chopper Command?" You always was real good at it.

Anita's relief floods the room like light. She is on her way before she knows it...

Sam seizes the moment, grabbing the diary, and starting up the stairs...

CUT TO:

INT SAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE: SAM

Downstairs we can hear the electronic battle sounds of the computer game and Emmett and Anita shouting like contestants in a game show. Sam is making herself comfortable as she did with the letters, but now she has Dwayne's diary, a spiral notebook, much worn and aged, that she lays out before her, pulling a lamp round to give good light.

She pulls a blanket round her, eats a Dorito and begins to read... Dwayne's voice has a different sound, lower, faster, exhausted, emotionally flat...

DWAYNE'S
VOICE (O.S.)
Ambushed. Knees still shaking. Bobby G. shot through the thigh, but okay, nicked the bone, a million dollar wound. Face to face with a VC. I won. Easier than I thought. Clean head shot. Back of his head gone, his face flat on the ground like a dinner plate with his picture on it. Picture of his babies in his pocket. Feet look like boiled chicken feet. No mail today. No cigarettes. Raining.

CLOSE: SAM

She slaps the diary shut. This is utterly different; her face is full of confusion. The main point here is the flat bland tone of Dwayne's voice in contrast to the violence of the events he speaks of: cigarettes or lack of are on the same plane as death and dismemberment. Rain is like blood and blood like rain.

Downstairs the computer combat boops and chirps. Suddenly she gets up... downstairs Emmett and Anita laugh together...

EXT HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside we can HEAR Emmett and Anita at their game. Sam emerges from the house carrying a sleeping bag, some stuff in a paper sack, the diary...she quietly slips into the bug.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

Emmett and Anita are deep in the game; they HEAR the bug start and drive off. Emmett gets up and goes to the door.

CLOSE: EMMETT (THROUGH THE SCREEN DOOR)

Looking off after her, as we HEAR the sound of the bug diminishing...He is concerned. Behind him we HEAR Anita whoop as she racks up some big victory.

ANITA
Gotcha! Gotcha, gotcha, gotcha!

Emmett turns back to her, smiling, but still worried...

EXT CAWOOD'S SWAMP - NIGHT

It is mostly underwater, with cypress knees sticking up like amputated limbs from the muck and water; the trees, shabby and tall, like Giacometti figures, scratch at the night sky, where a sliver of moon gives a feeble ghostly light. A landscape of the half-dead.

The Bug drives into the scene and stops. Sam gets out, carries her sleeping bag and paper sack and whatever. A path leads from this parking area, which is only the end of the twin ruts of the so-called road, down into the swamp, where the water gently rolls to the motion of unknown things below the oily surface.

VARIOUS SHOTS

The place scares her; she steps on dry wood that snaps, reminding her of snakes.

ON SAM

An animal suddenly rustles through the underbrush, startling her.

THE MOON glares down.

IN THE PEWTER SURFACE of the swamp water, some thing twists and rolls just below the surface, making silky waves that move silently toward her...

NEAR THE WATER

As Sam finds a dry spot in this weird landscape, and rolls out her sleeping bag.

She's got everything just right, the diary there before her, and the swamp all around: she looks out at:

THE OILY WATER

Moonlight makes a silver sheen; a swimming snake lays out a wake - long v's across the water. Birds make strange sounds.

SAM

Clouds of mosquitoes zero in. She has no repellant. She swipes at them.

Somewhere an owl mourns in the night. Abruptly, a bat sweeps through, devouring the gnats and mosquitoes that swarm to her face; its wings brush across her forehead. She shrieks.

Retreats into the sleeping bag. She turns on her flashlight inside the bag (CAMERA INSIDE WITH HER). She takes the diary and opens it...as she does so...

SOUND: FLOP, FLOP, FLOP of approaching helicopter blades. NIGHT SOUNDS we have never heard before. CRIES in the night; VOICES low into radios: "Blue Velvet, this is Night Cross, over." "Cold LZ, come on." "Coordinates niner fiver sixer..." "Tee Oh Tee on Position grid..." and interspersed with this jargon, distant SCREAMS, frightened voices, calling for help, "We're overrun." Maydaymaydaymayday....building to...as she starts to read...

COMBAT MONTAGE The text roughly parallels the images, sometimes with images illustrating what he is telling, sometimes in counterpoint. The real images shift into her nightmare images as we come to Dwayne's last words: his voice is backed by a SOUND MONTAGE as above, and with source music (Grace Slick singing "White Rabbit," Joe Cocker singing "Space Captain.") so picture and sound build in intensity to sudden silence at the end, as she closes the diary...

A FACE OF A COMBAT INFANTRY-MAN: YOUNG AND INFINITELY OLD. DAVID DUNCAN'S SHOT OF A GI IN KOREA: THE 1000 YARD STARE. IT'S DWAYNE.

AN ENTIRE LANDSCAPE EXPLODES: T.O.T. ARTILLERY. SMOKE CLEARS: WHAT WAS VIRGIN FOREST IS DESOLATE, TREES REDUCED TO TORTURED STUMPS, EVERYTHING DEAD.

THROUGH IT MOVES A SQUAD OF INFANTRY.

A SEVERED HAND. FOOT MOVES INTO FRAME BESIDE: REALIZE IT IS AN INFANT'S HAND

DWAYNE: LOOKING ROUND, FEAR.

DWAYNE (V.O.)
July 5 Hot Shot says we're getting closer. Hands cracked and bleeding. Depressed but letter from Irene got me out of it. Baby kicking strong. Shelling at Dark.

July 6. Walking point all day. Like hunting rabbits, miss those fall days.

July 7. Eddie is looking for trouble. Volunteered to walk point. Solid black but okay, quietest nigger I ever knew. Hotshot says he wouldn't say shit if he had a mouthfull of it.

DWAYNE, DRENCHED IN A BUDDY'S BLOOD, AS THOUGH HE HAD BEEN UNDER A FOUNTAIN, WEEPING, LAYS BUDDY'S BODY DOWN; AS HE DOES SO IT SEPARATES INTO PARTS, SPILLING GUTS OUT ONTO THE GROUND.

IN THE DARK, DWAYNE SMOKES, HIDING THE BUTT INSIDE HIS MOUTH AS MUCH AS HE CAN.

A VILLAGE BURNS; DWAYNE AND SQUAD RUN THROUGH IT PAST CHILDREN....

DWAYNE STALKS AND KILLS A VIET CONG LIKE HE WOULD A RABBIT.

AT THE KILL HE EXULTS, HIS ARMS SPREAD WIDE; IF HE HAD A FOOTBALL HE'D SPIKE IT.

A BLACK SCREEN, WHICH RESOLVES INTO SHADES OF BLACK:

HUGE TREES ARE SILHOUETTED AGAINST TRUE BLACK, AND AMONG THEM IN ANOTHER SHADE OF BLACK ONLY SLIGHTLY LIGHTER ARE SOLDIERS SILENTLY MOVING, DARTING ONE BY ONE FROM COVER TO COVER. BEHIND THE TREES SOME DISTANCE AWAY A GIGANTIC SHEET OF FIRE FLASHES UP AND DIES AS SUDDENLY AS IT CAME, AND MAKES NO NOISE. THE TREES AND THE MEN ARE SILHOUETTED AGAINST IT.

CLOSER ON SOLDIERS

AS THE FIRE BEHIND THEM DIES...

DWAYNE (V.O.)
July 8. Hotshot says we're almost there. Hotshot in a rage. He works us like a team of dogs, but if Hotshot didn't get so mad we wouldn't be as good as we are. We tell him the free world needs him, so he better re-enlist.

July 9. Burned hootches. Pregnant woman didn't want to come out. Hotshot made Darrell pull her out before she burned up with the house. I pray Irene and babe okay. I try to play she's here with me, but when I get her in my mind real good she floats away. I wouldn't want her here to see this.

July 10. Hotshot mad enough to climb trees. Found a dead gook under some rotten leaves. Interesting to see the body parts broken down. Like in biology. Bobby G. stirred a stick around in it and some teeth fell out. Darrell taken one for good luck. Uncle B. used to go deer hunting with deer piss on him.

July 11. Hotshot pissed. Too tired to write.

July 12. Ambushed. Knees still shaking. Bobby G. shot through the thigh, but okay, nicked the bone, a million dollar wound. Face to face with a VC.

...THEY DIVE INTO THE LOOSE ROTTING LEAVES ON THE JUNGLE FLOOR. THE LEAVES ARE PHOSPHORESCENT, AND WHEN THEY ARE DISTURBED THEY BURST INTO A LIGHT GREENISH GLOW IN THE DARK.

IN THE PITCH BLACK EACH SOLDIERS' DIVE IS MARKED BY A SPLASH OF GLOWING LEAVES FLYING UP, LIKE THE SPLASH OF A DIVE INTO A SWIMMING POOL.

THE LEAVES STICK, SO NOW THEY ARE OUTLINED AND SPOTTED BY THE GLOWING LEAVES, THAT THEY TRY FRANTICALLY TO BRUSH AWAY...

DWAYNE (V.O.)
I won. Easier than I thought. Clean head shot. Back of his head gone, his face flat on the ground like a dinner plate with his picture on it. Picture of his babies in his pocket.

July 13. Feet look like boiled chicken feet. No mail today. No cigarettes. Raining. Yesterday we was up over killing gooks. Today real bad.

When I get back to the world this will be a dream, but now the world is a dream.

Hotshot says we're almost there.

SOLDIERS DYING...

...a ghostly ballet in the dark. Machine gun bullets rip into them. They dance jerkily, like puppets, the glowing leaves flying up around them. One of them is Dwayne.

VARIABLE SPEED MOTOR: INCREASINGLY FAST CRANK

...so they slow down into graceful sad movements, dying a dance of death in the greenglow of the rotting forest...

CLOSE: DWAYNE

His face blackened, dying:

THEN A LIGHT SEEMS TO COME ONTO HIS FACE. HE SEES SOMETHING CLOSE, THAT LIGHTS UP HIS SOUL.

CLOSE (P.O.V.): SAM

SHE IS IN THE LIGHT FROM THE FLASHLIGHT AND SEEMS TO BE PEERING CURIOUSLY INTO HIS FACE. TEARS STREAMING DOWN...

DWAYNE:

HE SMILES AS HE LOOKS INTO HER EYES, AND DIES...

REVERSE: HER P.O.V.: DWAYNE

He is the diary in Sam's hands, being closed.

THE MUSIC ENDS. DEAD SILENCE.

SAM, CLOSE, AS:

Sweat runs down her face from the confinement of the sleeping bag. She holds the diary. Her face tells us her horror.

Sam switches off the dimming flashlight.

BLACK SCREEN.

SOUND: SHE UNZIPS THE SLEEPING BAG

Dim early morning light, gray, floods in as she sits up, revealing the swamp in pre-dawn light, fog lying on the water and among the cypress knees.

EMMETT sits quietly beside her, looking out over the swamp. He turns as she sits up out of the bag.

SAM
Emmett!!

EMMETT
(quietly)
What the hell were you doin out here?

SAM
Humpin the boonies...

EMMETT
"Humping the boonies..!" This ain't Viet Nam. This is just a swamp for boy-scouts to get lost and found in.

SAM
How'd you find me?

EMMETT
Oh, hell, it's just like you. I knew you had that diary. D'you read it?

Sam nods.

EMMETT
What did you think?

SAM
I don't like him anymore.

EMMETT
You don't like him? That's so fuckin weak! Who are you to say that about him? You know what I thought when I came back home, and I looked around at everybody here, I thought how In-country, every second you was on guard or you died. Boy that made you keen: that made you sleep with your eyes open. The thousand yard stare. Every cell in your body was awake and full of electricity, that was being alive! And I come back home and look around and what I saw was how weak everybody's game was. You "might not like him anymore." Who the hell are you to judge him? I'll tell you something, Sam, when all your best buddies are shot to hell, it feels good to get even!

SAM
Emmett, go on, talk about it!

EMMETT
When ever'body you care a little bit about gets killed, one after the other, or sometimes just in a big pile of busted bones and guts and blood runnin out, after a while you don't let yourself care about nobody anymore, because if you do, you make a friend, you let yourself care about somebody, they're gonna die. So after a while you just quit feeling. You understand that? Little girl? You're walkin around Hopewell High, afraid somebody might not look at you the right way, or, shit!

SAM
Go on, Emmett.

EMMETT
(gestures to the swamp and the night)
And they're all still alive. You know that? In my head. They're all sittin around a village that's all burnt out. They're heatin ham and mother fuckers over canned heat, and waitin for the Huey to come and evacuate us. They have a dead VC sittin up with a hat on and a cigarette stuck in his mouth. And they're wonderin 'where is old Emmett? How is he doin back in Hopewell?' And they're wondering, why ain't I there, with them. They're waitin for me. I'm hanging on here with every bit of strength I got, it exhausts me. I got nothin left over. For you or Anita or anybody else.

Emmett has become deeply disturbed; Sam is scared herself, tries to touch him, he flings her hand violently away. Shuddering with tears held too long...

EMMETT
First when you ran off I thought <u>you</u> were dead.

SAM
Dead!? How...what made you think that?

EMMETT
I thought you left me. I was afraid you'd kill yourself.

SAM
I wouldn't do that!

EMMETT
A lot of kids do, it's on the news. I don't know, it was like bein left by myself and all my buddies dead. I had to find you.

SAM
You did something like that before. When you went to 'Nam, you went for Mom and me...

EMMETT
Isn't what you wanted was it? Then you all got stuck with me for life for what I did, that you never asked me to do. Fuck a duck!

A moment of silence. The sun rises; the gray fog and the oily black water turn gold...

SAM
Why don't you just let Anita love you? That's all she wants to do.

EMMETT
(moan of despair)
Anita! You can all go to hell! I know I'm missing out on life, pleasure, all that stuff, but it ain't worth the pain.

Emmett throws his head back and gives an animal cry of utter pain and despair; all of the pent up pain comes flooding out. After a while Sam is able to touch him.

EMMETT
There's somethin wrong with me. Like somethin in the middle of my heart is gone, and I can't get it back. It's out there, with them. Like I'm half dead already...

SAM
Don't you want to have a family, like other people. Don't you want to <u>do</u> something with your life?

EMMETT
I <u>want</u> to be a father. But I can't. The closest I can come is with you. And I failed. I never should have let you go so wild. I should have taken care of you.

SAM
You cared. That's why you went to 'Nam. That's why you came after me.

EMMETT
I was afraid. I came out here to save you from somethin, but maybe I can't. Maybe you have to save yourself.

He is exhausted by the release of the years of pent up emotion. He begins to pick up her bedroll and stuff. She helps.

EMMETT
There are things you can figure out, but most things you can't, some you just never figure out. You ready to go?

She can't speak; just nods. He puts his arm around her and they begin to walk up out of the swamp... Dawn blazes around them in the golden fog.... as they walk away from us...

SAM
Emmett, I wish that bird would come.

EMMETT
Yeah. You know why I'd like to see it?

SAM
No.

EMMETT
When you think about something like birds, just goin on, while everything around them is crazy, you can get outside of yourself. It doesn't hurt as much. That's the whole challenge for the human race! Think about that.
(pause)
But I can barely get to the point where I can be a self to get out of.

But Sam is not listening. She is looking at something that

fills her face with light... She stops Emmett to look where she looks...

SKIMMING ABOVE THE GOLDEN FOG IS A WHITE BIRD, THAT SWEEPS PAST THEM OFF INTO THE TREES.

AND IS GONE...

CUT TO:

INT BUG - DAY (MOVING SHOT)

MAMAW FUSSING WITH A POT OF GERANIUMS ON THE INSTRUMENT PANEL. Emmett is driving. Sam lolls in the back seat, smoking and trying to arrange so the smoke goes out the back window and Mamaw won't have to breathe it. The transmission gives a SOUND and the car JOLTS...

EMMETT
Doggone. The transmission just popped out. I thought you told me Tom said he rebuilt it.

He drives with his hand holding the lever in high.

SAM
He did. Damn!

MAMAW
Your language, girl.

EMMETT
Well, it's popping out. I just thought I'd tell you.

SAM
I'm not sorry I bought the car, so don't throw it in my face.

They lost speed when the transmission popped; on this Interstate huge trucks roar by the tiny Bug, inches away.

MAMAW
I miss home. If I get home in one piece I'll be happy.

EMMETT
You'll be all right, Mrs Hughes.

SAM
Maybe we should call Tom.

EMMETT
Sure. Tell him to come get us with his tow truck...

SAM
That's sarcastic. The car's old. Transmissions freeze up.

EMMETT
You're just making excuses for him. He sold you a bum car.

SAM
It's not a bum car. It's going to look great when I paint it black, so it'll look mean.

MAMAW
You take after Irene, Sam. You've got Dwayne's eyes, but Irene's ways.

EMMETT
Bap. There it went again.

Sam slaps at Emmett's shoulders...Mamaw fusses with the geranium pot...

MAMAW
I still can't get used to the idea how you whooshed in there at home and triggered me off on this trip. I'm sorry Joe's back was up. But he'd of worried about the wheat; it's gettin near ready to cut. Though what for I don't know, at the market price we're losing 85 cents to a dollar every bushel we'll raise. Sometimes I think Dwayne's almost better off out of this; he'd of been a farmer, like his Daddy.

SAM
If you could do it over would you have send Dwayne to Canada instead?

MAMAW
Oh, Sam, people don't have choices like that.
(after a moment)
Besides he did good for his country. I take comfort in that.

SAM
What good did he do for his country? 58,000 guys died, for a stupid war. Emmett says they all died for nothing.

MAMAW
Emmett can talk. He didn't die.

EMMETT
The driver is not responsible for the opinions of the passengers of this car. You're right Mrs Hughes, I'm alive and horrible.

MAMAW
Well, I'm sorry Emmett, I don't mean to step on your feelings, but I have to speak out how I feel.

SAM
Emmett, can you look for another station on the radio?

MAMAW
Emmett, my legs is botherin me, I got to take another pill, maybe you could start lookin for a place to stop. With some barbeque. I didn't feed us enough at breakfast.

CUT TO:

EXT IRENE'S HOUSE (LEXINGTON) - DAY

The Bug dances up into the circular drive and stops. They get out, Emmett coming round to help Mamaw... She is wearing peach colored knit pants and a flowered blouse, with white socks and blue tennis shoes. Sam slips out the driver's side while Emmett engineers Mamaw out of the car...

CLOSER ANGLES

As Mamaw shakes her legs, gets her body going, Sam is pacing around. Emmett grabs her for a moment to whisper in her ear

EMMETT
Take it easy.

SAM
I want to scream if this keeps up.

EMMETT
Well, she's never been anywhere before, and she doesn't know how to act.

They break it up as Mamaw approaches, and Emmett goes to the door...leaving Sam with Mamaw...

IRENE IS IN THE FRONT DOOR:

IRENE
My God, pardon my French, but if it isn't all my favorite people in the world! Get in here!

CUT TO:

FRAME IS BLACK AND WHITE: A GIGANTIC MORETON BAY FIG TREE FILLS THE SCREEN, FULL OF HIPPIES. (WE ARE IN AN E.C.U. - CAMERA PANNING AROUND ON DETAILS OF A STILL PHOTO). FLOWING SKIRTS, LEATHER, BANDANNAS, LONG HAIR AND BEARDS TO TELL US WHICH ARE MEN...ABOUT TWENTY PEOPLE IN THE TREE. LOTS OF CRAZY HATS.

WE HEAR THE SOUND (FROM THE NEXT ROOM) OF A TV CAR CHASE, AND (CLOSE PRESENCE) OF IRENE SPEAKING TO SAM... AND IRENE'S FINGER, LONG RED NAILS, OCCASIONALLY TOUCHING THE FIGURES...

SAM (O.S.)
They look like they're having a good time.

IRENE (O.S.)
(SOUND: lights a cigarette)
I shouldn't be smoking again, but Heather's almost weaned. Look
(MORE)

CONTINUED:

IRENE (O.S.)
at the way we were! That's the one I came up here with; that's Jean, that he married in the end, she ran away to practice witchcraft.

SAM (O.S.)
I remember you trying to keep me quiet while he was sleeping.

IRENE (O.S.)
<u>There's</u> Emmett.

Her finger points out way at the dangerous end of the highest and narrowest branch, where a young hippy hangs upside down by his knees, his hair hanging a good three feet below him.

We recognize Emmett fifteen years younger, and ecstatically stoned.

SAM (O.S.)
Come on with us and see Dwayne's name.

TWOSHOT: IRENE AND SAM

The picture is in an album they have on their laps in the den or dining room...

IRENE
Oh, I don't think so. You do it. God what a time that was. It wasn't a happy time, Sam. Don't go makin it out like it was.

From the other room the car chase comes to an end with satisfactory SKIDS, SLAMS, CRASHES AND EXPLOSIONS.

MAMAW (O.S.)
Oh, my!

CAMERA SHIFTS to include the living room, where Mamaw and Lorenzo sit before the TV, Lorenzo muting the sound while he bops around the channels. Heather lies asleep in his lap. Mamaw has washed her hair and her head is crisscrossed with a pattern of hairpins; she wears a towel over her shoulders. Emmett is getting up to get beers...

EMMETT
Mind if I...?

LORENZO
Mrs Hughes, have you thought about going through Colonial Williamsburg on your way?

MAMAW
I've never been so far away from home in my life; it's too late to do that in my old age.

LORENZO
You're not old, Mrs Hughes.

MAMAW
I'm fifty eight and I got twenty years of worry tacked on to that.

EMMETT
(bringing beers)
You're as old as you feel.

TWOSHOT: SAM AND IRENE

They have been watching the others, a unity growing between them.

IRENE
Is he going with Anita Stevens again?

SAM
Mom. Can I move up here and go to college?

Irene screams with joy; startling the others, and waking Heather.

IRENE
Oh, Sam! That's the sweetest thing!

And she bursts into tears. Lorenzo appears with Heather, who is crying...he is unctuously attentive to the baby, to Sam's fascination.

LORENZO
(to Heather)
Well, what is this, we're just going to have to clean up this little mud pie, and then Mommy has got what's good for us. Sam, you want to see how we change a baby? I got your graduation pictures back, by the way.

As Lorenzo takes the baby off to change its diaper...

SAM
That baby has a lot more personality than before...

But she might be referring to Lorenzo...Mamaw comes out of the powder room, with her potted geranium...

MAMAW
Irene, I'm sorry, I shook some dirt on the rug in here. You must think I'm just a country hick draggin in dirt.

LORENZO
(O.S.)
Nothin to it, Mrs Hughes. Soon as I got Heather tended to I'll take the porta vac to it...

Mamaw looks at Irene. Tears spring to her eyes.

MAMAW
Dwayne always thought you hung the moon.

CUT TO:

EXT WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

Constitution Ave., rush hour, jammed with cars. Out of the huge jam pick out the Bug, lost in the crush...

It begins to pick it way daringly through the crowd, changing lanes to get to...

NEW ANGLE By curb. There are a few parking spaces nearest the Monument, usually occupied. Right now, as though by a miracle, as the Bug comes, some imperial caravan of flag bearing limousines sweeping them aside to the sound of

police escort sirens, a cab pulls out, and Sam dodges straight into the vacated space.

BY THE BUG

As they get out, Sam racing around to help Mamaw; Emmett unfolding himself from the back. As we face the curb, the Memorial is completely out of sight though only a few yards away; in the distance is the Washington Monument rising whitely to the sky. Behind them and us is the Lincoln Memorial. Slightly to the right is the conventional statue of the three Nam vets looking off across the green fields to the wall. The landing pattern for National Airport goes virtually overhead, so jets roar above us from time to time.

MAMAW
I don't see it.

EMMETT
It's over yonder. They say you come up on it sudden.

They begin to walk along to the path...

MAMAW
My legs are beginning to hurt. Emmett, I forgot my geraniums.

EMMETT
You go on, Mrs Hughes, I'll go back and get them.

WITH EMMETT

As he goes back to the Bug and gets out the pot of geraniums. He hesitates and seems to hyperventilate: for a moment his guard is down and we SEE his apparent easiness is maintained by considerable will. It takes real effort to force himself to follow them toward the Wall.

SAM AND MAMAW

They are moving along. Mixed groups, many parents and children, some widows with a child, buddies, etc. all move along. It has a subdued respectful holiday atmosphere, like the crowd in Cathedrals at Christmas. Emmett catches up to them, clutching the geraniums to his chest.

SAM
There it is...

NEW ANGLE

MAMAW
Law, it's black as night.

The monument is massive, a gash in the low swell of the lawn around it, dwarfing the people moving slowly along it.

SAM
How are we going to find him?

Emmett turns to the Directory, that stands in a weatherproof stand by the path.

EMMETT
I'll look up his name for you, Mrs Hughes.

People are moving past them...

MAMAW
It don't show up good. It's just a hole in the ground.

EMMETT
It's on Panel 9E. That's all the way down the other end.

They begin to move on down along the wall, the names starting at their ankles, then rising to their knees...

DOLLY FROM ABOVE

So as they move along they are progressively disappearing from sight.

MAMAW
I didn't think it would look like this.

Schoolgirls move through, noisy as chickens...

SCHOOLGIRL 1
Are they all piled up here on top of each other?

SCHOOLGIRL 2
What are all these names anyway?

Their heads disappear...behind a white carnation that grows

out of a crack between tiles at the top of the wall. Mamaw is looking at it as she, too disappears...

NEW ANGLE

Showing the full wall, now higher than they, the full weight of the names hitting us; see them in reflection as well as their real figures... Mamaw is puffing a bit...

SAM
I wish Tom was here. He needs to be here.

EMMETT
He'll make it someday. They're all comin one of these days whenever they're ready.

SAM
You going to look for anybody besides my Daddy?

Emmett glances at her use of the word; the first time he's heard her call him anything but Dwayne, or "my father."

EMMETT
Yeah. I'm gonna look up some guys. Some - I don't know if they're here or not. Mrs Hughes, you all right? We're about there.

They pass two workmen in hard hats. They have a tall step ladder, and noisy machinery. One hat says "NEVER AGAIN". They appear to be drilling into the wall.

MAMAW
What's he doin, hon?

They have duct tape protecting a few names, while they use sanding devices to remove a yellow hue that highlights some names as though they had been magic markered.

MAN
Some sicko vandalized that. Why would they do that?

WOMAN
No. Somebody just wanted their names to stand out and be noticed. I can go with that.

Emmett continues to search for the name. A woman puts down a vase with flowers and a big placard: VFW POST 7215. A man in a wheelchair rolls by.

Mamaw finds a bench and sits to rest. Sam comes to her. Holds her hand

SAM
It's just like Mom said. The names. Bobby Gene and Freddie Ray and Jimmy Bob. Country boys.

MAMAW
Country kids are just like the city kids now. They've got more. They've got cars. Used to, Saturday was when you went to town, but now they take off and go any day of the week.

Emmett signals he's found the right panel: they rise...

As she reaches Emmett, Mamaw brushes and fluffs the flowers in the pot, in Sam's arms, like plumping a pillow. Emmett stands straight before the wall looking for the name. Mamaw puts on her reading glasses, leaning forward and looking purposefully, like looking for a cow that got out of the pasture.

EMMETT
There it is.

He points well above his head. He reaches up and touches it, as though reading it in Braille.

SAM

Steps in beside him. He glances down at her, then reads:

EMMETT
Dwayne E. Hughes.

MAMAW
I can't reach it. Oh, I'd like to touch it.

SAM
We'll set the flowers down here, Mamaw.

She puts them down at the base among others. She starts digging in her bag until she finds her wallet, out of which

she digs her picture, the one Lorenzo made of her at her graduation...

MAMAW
I'm going to bawl. I wish I could touch it.

Sam puts the picture against the flowerpot, and looks up to where Dwayne's name is...then

SAM
Mister...

She is calling to the workmen... she runs over to them. We SEE them look toward Mamaw. They nod and bring the ladder...

SAM
They want you to use it, Mamaw...

MAMAW
No. I can't do it. You do it.

WORKMAN
Go ahead, Ma'am. We'll hold her steady.

MAMAW
Somebody might see up my dress.

EMMETT
No, go on, Mrs Hughes, you can do it. We'll help you reach it.

He takes her arm and they all get her up on the first step, and help her swing herself to the next one. She reaches but can't get to it; she seems scared. She holds her dress tight against her thigh with one hand while they help her up the final step.

She touches the name, stroking it tentatively like stroking a strange cat's back. She backs down the ladder, weeping.

MAMAW
Sam, you go up there, and do it. Here take the Instamatic. Get his name.

SAM
I can't shoot this close.

MAMAW
Let me get a picture of you up there, then.

Sam climbs up. She leans close to the wall, her face reflected as she looks at the letters incised in the wall. She leans forward and as she kisses the tile her breath fogs the reflection of her face in the dark stone.

MAMAW (O.S.)
Smile.

Sam turns and involuntarily smiles at the absurdity of the request. She sees...

P.O.V.

Along the wall. Mamaw taking her picture, the people, the waiting Workmen, and her eyes go to Emmett who has found something he was looking for, a few feet further along the wall; he is just sitting down before the wall, looking at names, sitting cross legged.

She is coming down the ladder...

MAMAW
(continued, to workmen)
Thank you kindly, that was real nice...Did we lose Emmett?

Sam is looking to where

EMMETT sits, touching a name with one hand, sitting cross legged, reflected in the wall. Slowly his face bursts into a smile like flames...

END MUSIC comes up and we SEE

A JET HAS BEEN APPROACHING, AND THE CAMERA MOVES TO SHOW US SAM, AND SAM REFLECTED IN THE WALL. As the plane flies over head it's silver birdlike shape is reflected in the wall, too, taking off, free, into an unknown future.

FULLSHOT: MEMORIAL

The jet continues to fly into the future. From behind the shoulder of the wall, Sam, Emmett, Mamaw rise up into view,

THREESHOT: SAM, EMMETT, MAMAW

their arms around each other, all smiling, quiet, passing the quiet smiling crowd, moving on...

MAMAW (V.O.)
Coming up on this wall of a sudden and seeing how black it was, it was so awful, but then I came down in it and saw that white carnation sticking out of that crack, and it gave me hope. It made me know He's watching over us.

FADE OUT:

THE END